

December 5, 2004 by Steve Brandon



Do You Understand?

Matthew 22:23-33

Do You Understand...

1. The Teaching of Scripture? (verses 31-32)
2. The Power of God? (verse 29)
3. The Character of Heaven? (verse 30)
4. The Wisdom of Jesus? (verse 33)

As many of you know, this past weekend my family hosted two international students from China. We have hosted international students over Thanksgiving weekend for several years now. We have always found it to be a very enjoyable time for us. I would encourage some of you to seriously consider doing this next year. Welcoming international students into your home gives you a glimpse into what the world is like outside of our country. At our house, one of our first activities we do when these students step into our home is to go and grab our world atlas. We ask them to show us where they are from. As a result of our time with these students, we have heard much about other nations and their living conditions. We have learned of their mindset and world views. We have learned of foreign politics and religion. We have tasted their food which they have cooked for us. They have shared their lives with us. It's also been an opportunity for us to share of our lives with them as well. And what better thing do we have to share than the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Every time that we have hosted students, the gospel has come up quite naturally. There are enough things around our house the provoke conversation. What we do. What we say. How we act. Our genuine love for one another. They all point to who we are, and it always has led to the gospel. This year, things were made quite easy. On Wednesday evening, we had a potluck dinner with them. We began our conversations by asking these men a few questions about where they are from. We asked them how long they would be in the U.S. We asked them what they were studying. After answering several of our questions about them, they switched the topic to us. They asked me, "What do you do for a living?" When I told them that I was a pastor, their eyes lit up. One of them said, "Then, you can teach us the Bible! We are interested in the Bible!"

Needless to say, the weekend went very smoothly. On various occasions, we took out Bibles and began to read them. I found out that one of these men had read the Bible quite a bit. But, he told me that in China, he didn't know any Christians. He said that he lives in a town of 1.2 million people. He knows of one church in that town. The other hadn't read the Bible very much. So, I tried to give them a good overview of the entire Bible, so that they might be able to better understand the role of Jesus in it. We began with creation. We moved on and discussed Abraham and the choosing of the nation of Israel. Then, we looked at the years of rebellion that Israel went through. They loved their idols. They loved their own ways, and they hated God. We discussed the coming of Jesus. Here was God, coming to the Jews to save them. And they killed Him. When we got to this point in the story of the Bible, one of the men said, "That's so sad. Why didn't they believe? The message came through to them."

We had many opportunities to talk about the Bible. I remember one question that was particularly difficult to answer, especially with the difficulty in their English. They asked if the Jews believe the Bible today. On the one hand, I affirmed that they do. They read the Old Testament today. They study the Old Testament. They memorize it. For the most part, their synagogue services are saturated with the Scripture after Scripture. But, on the other hand, I told them that the Jews don't believe the Bible. Jesus said it most clearly, "If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me" (John 6:46). In other words, "to believe the Old Testament is to believe in Jesus." The Jews spend much time in the Old Testament. The Jews profess to believe the Old Testament. But, as they reject Jesus, they demonstrate that they don't believe the Old Testament. Much of the problem of the Jews today is that they simply don't understand the Old Testament. They may read it. They may study it. But, they don't understand it. It is as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:15, "Whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart."

In our text this morning, we will encounter some people who didn't understand the Scriptures either. I'm talking about the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a religious sect of the Jews in the days of Jesus. According to Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived in Jerusalem around the time of Jesus, there were three splinter groups of Jews: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. (Antiquities 13:5:9). Each of these groups had their own particular doctrines that would set them apart from the others. They weren't too unlike our denominations today. In the New Testament, we hear most about the Pharisees, a little about the Sadducees, and nothing about the Essenes.

In Matthew's gospel, the Pharisees have been everywhere. They have listened to Jesus teach. They have witnessed Jesus doing many miracles. They have tried to persuade the crowds away from Jesus. They have tried to trap Jesus. We know much about the Pharisees.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, have been around on only a few occasions in Matthew's gospel. In Matthew 3, they came to John the Baptist to be baptized by Him. In Matthew 16, they teamed up with the Pharisees in attempts to persuade Jesus to give them a sign from heaven. That's all we have seen of the Sadducees so far. Here in chapter 22, they appear for the third and final time. We don't know much about these Sadducees. But, the good news is that we don't need to know much about them. Matthew gives us the key information we need to know about these Sadducees. In verse 23, Matthew tells us that they "say there is no resurrection." They believed that this life was all there is. After you die, you are finished. There is no coming back from the dead. When the body perishes, the soul does as well (Josephus,

Antiquities of the Jews, 18:1:4). It is easy to remember that this is what the Sadducees believe. For, with such a belief, it makes you "Sad, you see."

Josephus tells us that they also believed that there is no judgment after this life, and thus, no rewards or penalties (Josephus, War of the Jews 2:8:14). They were naturalists, who didn't believe in the supernatural. In fact, in Acts 23:8, we find out that these Sadducees didn't believe in angels or spirits either. They were eminently earthy people, who believed in the here and now.

The Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection. They thought that it was speculation and folly to believe in it. As they spoke with Jesus, they tried to expose the folly of believing in the resurrection by asking the question that begins in verse 24, ...

"Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies, having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up an offspring to his brother'" (Matt. 22:24).

Like the Pharisees in the previous passage, they started with a flattering remark, calling Jesus, "Teacher." They didn't have to do this, but I'm sure it was part of their ploy to trap Jesus by trying to get Jesus on their good side. Then, they began their question by quoting from the law of Moses. Now, from what else we know of the Sadducees from historical sources, this is pretty typical of them as well. They placed a high premium on the teaching of Moses. As such, they were a bit different than the Pharisees, who willingly embraced the oral law, which went way beyond Moses and the rest of the Old Testament.

They quoted from Deuteronomy 25:5, in which Moses gave regulation as to what should take place when a man dies, leaving his wife with no children. In this verse, the brother was instructed to take this widow as his wife and "raise up an offspring" for him. I want you to focus your attention upon their quote. They said that such an arrangement would "raise up an offspring." This word is the same word as "resurrection" which literally means "raising up." And it's here where we see the subtlety of the Sadducees. This was their form of resurrection belief. People are resurrected insofar as their children proceed to live. In this sense, they believed in the resurrection. But, they certainly didn't believe in the resurrection of which Jesus spoke! They believed that the resurrection led to a logical absurdity. Rather than believing the Scriptures, they trusted their own logic like many do today. Verses 25-28 give us an insight into the difficulties that these Sadducees had with believing the resurrection. They place before Jesus a story. ...

"Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother; so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. And last of all, the woman died. In the resurrection therefore whose wife of the seven shall she be? For they all had her." (Matt. 22:25-28)

Now, we don't know if the events in this story really happened. The Sadducees sure made this sound like it happened. They said that there were seven brothers "with us" as if to say that they were real people. In many ways, it seems a bit far fetched to me. I can understand a man dying and leaving a widow. I can understand that a brother of the man who died, would decide to marry the woman. I can understand the second brother dying as well. I can even understand it happening a third time. But, seven times? You'd think that the fourth or fifth man might have some sense about him that this woman is bad news. I would definitely want to check that woman's spice rack to see if arsenic is her spice of choice.

At any rate, the dilemma stands whether it is seven husbands or two husbands who died. What about those who have been married several times? There are some of you in this room who have been married before. Several of us have relatives who have been married multiple times. Several of my sisters are married to men who have been married before. In once case, his previous wife died in a tragic car accident. In another case, his previous wife left him and wanted nothing to do with his Christianity. The question still stands, "In the resurrection, what will be of those who have been married multiple times?" To whom will they be married? With this question, I'm sure that these Sadducees thought that they had Jesus right where they wanted Him. Surely they thought to themselves, "Jesus cannot answer this question."

But, Jesus, as always, answers the question plainly and honestly. He said, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scripture, or the power of God" (verse 29). From this verse, I have generated my sermon title this morning, "Do You Understand?" The Sadducees were mistaken because of two crucial errors: they didn't understand the Scripture, and they didn't understand the power of God. Verse 29 will form the basis of our first two points this morning.

1. Do You Understand the Teaching of Scripture? (verses 31-32)

The Scripture teaches the resurrection. There is no question of that. And Jesus gives the proof of this in verses 31 and 32. He says, ...

"But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

As He began his answer, Jesus was very careful to define what He was talking about. Jesus clearly referred to "the resurrection of the dead." He made sure that His remarks couldn't be interpreted as talking about a resurrection as "raising up offspring" (v.24). He is talking of the resurrection of the dead.

With this response, Jesus demonstrates His amazing ability to handle the Scripture. Jesus didn't quote from Psalm 16:10, which teaches the resurrection. Jesus didn't quote from Isaiah 53:10, which teaches the resurrection. Nor did he quote from Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 26:19, or Job 19:25-27. All of those passages teach the resurrection as well. Furthermore, Jesus could have used the OT narrative of Elisha raising up the widow's son from the dead (1 Kings 4:18-37). Or he could have shown that the resurrection was possible, by bringing Lazarus to them, who was dead for four days, but was raised from the dead by Jesus only a few days before these Sadducees questioned Jesus.

The Sadducees, with their emphasis upon the writings of Moses could easily have dismissed all these examples as being inconsistent with the teachings of Moses, even their experience. So, Jesus goes back to the words of Moses, Himself. Jesus quotes from Exodus 3:6, which Moses, Himself wrote.

The argument of Jesus goes like this: Abraham had lived some 600 years before Moses was ever born. By the time Moses arrives, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had long been in the tomb. Yet, hundreds of years later, when God appeared to Moses at the burning bush, He said, "**I am** the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). It was precisely because God didn't say, "**I was** the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" that Jesus can argue that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must still be living! [\[1\]](#)

Indeed, this was Jesus' point: "He is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Matt. 22:32). The fact that God spoke in the present tense means that these men must still be alive. Life doesn't end in the grave. Life continues on long past the day you die here upon the earth. Do you believe this? Do you believe that when you die, you will be every bit alive as you are right now? D. L. Moody (1837-1899) captured it well when he said,

"Someday you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now; I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal – a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. I was born of the flesh in 1837. I was born of the Spirit in 1856. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit will live forever" [\[2\]](#)

This is what the Scriptures teach. Every single one of us will die someday. But in that day, we shall not die. We shall live. It's simply that the sphere of our life will be transferred from this earth to another place. I have heard someone rightly describe it as the most thrilling roller coaster ride that you will ever take! Only this roller coaster doesn't return to where you began. It takes you to an entirely new place. One moment, you will be gasping for air, trying to sustain your life. The next moment, you will be in the presence of almighty God to account for your life. This is what the Scriptures teach. Hebrews 9:27 says it as clear as any text in all of the Bible, "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." And when you stand before God, you have only one hope. Your only chance is that Jesus Christ will step into the courtroom scene and say "Father, this one is mine. I purchased him with My blood upon the cross. You already punished Me for His sin. You cannot punish Him again. He enters Our kingdom." Your only hope is that Jesus Christ will not be ashamed of you at the judgment. Jesus said, "Everyone ... who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

The teaching of the resurrection is a major doctrine in the New Testament. When the apostles went out to preach, they often made mention of the resurrection of Christ. This was the central point of their message. Paul's letters are saturated with references to the resurrection. He writes not only about Christ's resurrection, but also ours. Paul lived his life with the crown of righteousness as that for which he longed to obtain (2 Tim. 4:8). He wanted to be rid of this sinful, wretched body, and set free to serve God (Rom. 7:24). Paul devotes all 58 verses of 1 Corinthians 15 to the resurrection. The Apostles Creed, which the early church used as a confession of faith, mention of the resurrection: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy catholic (i.e. universal) church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, the life everlasting."

Do you understand what the Scriptures are teaching? The doctrine is so glorious that you ought to eagerly long for the day when Jesus transforms you! Sadly, the Sadducees didn't understand the teaching of Scripture. Neither did they understand the power of God. Jesus told them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God."

2. Do You Understand the Power of God? (verse 29)

There are many people who doubt the resurrection simply because they don't believe in the power of God. They think that once you have fallen into the grave, there's no hope again of rising. I admit, the more you understand of what happens to a body when it dies, it continues to seem more and more improbable that a corpse could ever raise from the dead. But, the Scripture would teach us otherwise. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul teaches us about those who have died. We are told that we ought not to grieve like those who have no hope of the resurrection. Certainly, we grieve the loss of a loved one. Certainly, we grieve that we will see them no longer. Certainly, we grieve the hole that is left in our lives. But, we as Christians have a hope that those who have trusted Christ in this life will go to a better place. When we grieve for those who have died in Christ, we are grieving for ourselves. We are grieving our loss, not theirs. They will enter into joy with Jesus when they die (Matt. 25:23). Paul called dying "gain" (Phil. 1:21). He longed to be with Christ more than he wanted to live. When the Lord comes back, He will bring with Him those who have "fallen asleep in Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:14). They will be alive in a greater measure than we will be. When a Christian dies, it is "very much better" for him! (Phil. 1:23).

Often, when people don't believe in the resurrection, it has to do with their lack of understanding of the power of God. This was the case of these Sadducees. But, God is powerful beyond all measure! Jeremiah once prayed to God, "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You!" (Jer. 32:16). I remember hearing the story the scientists who got together and decided that man had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell God that they were done with Him. This scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and get lost." God listened very patiently and kindly to the man and after the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well, how about this, let's say we have a man-making contest." To which the scientist replied, "OK, great!" But God added, "Now, we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam." The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt. God just looked at him and said, "Whoa! Wait a minute. ... You go get your own dirt!"

To create from nothing is incredible. It must have been created by a divine being, who is outside of our creation. It must have been created by One who is so unlike us! To create the vastness of the universe is unbelievable. It testifies to the power of God. In the grand scheme of things, we are puny. We live but 70-80 years (Psalm 90:10). There are billions of us who live upon this earth. And our earth is but one small planet in our solar system. Our solar system is one of 200 billion solar systems in our galaxy. Our galaxy is one of trillions of galaxies in the visible universe. And God created it all in six days by speaking it into existence. The power needed to resurrect a body from the grave is nothing compared to this. Perhaps we need to hear afresh the question that Paul put forth to these Sadducees in Acts 26:8, "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?"

The fact of the resurrection ought not to be a difficulty with you. Exactly what is going to happen might be fuzzy in your mind. But, that God is able to resurrect a body from the dead ought not to be a question for you. Especially if you understand the power of God. To be sure, there is much mystery surrounding the resurrection. When exactly is the resurrection? How many resurrections are there? (Revelation 20:5 mentions the "first" resurrection.) Who will be resurrected? What exactly happens after the resurrection? Do the molecules of our body all come back together? Are we entirely recreated? What will our bodies be like in the resurrection? What about marriage and relationships in heaven? Questions abound when you start thinking about the resurrection.

Rather than dealing with all of these questions on a superficial level, I want to deal in detail with only one of them: What about marriage and relationships in heaven? I want to deal with this question because Jesus deals with this question in our text this morning. He deals with this in the verse of Scripture that I skipped over, verse 30. The question is pertinent to many of us in this room who are married, or who have been married before. This is my third point this morning.

3. Do You Understand the Character of Heaven? (verse 30)

Jesus said, "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (verse 30).

First of all, I would like for you to note that this would have been a slam to the Sadducees who originally asked this question. As I told you, they didn't believe in angels. But Jesus here asserts the reality of angels. They would have hated many of the Christmas songs we sang today in our church service. We sang *Angels From the Realms of Glory*, *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, and *Angels We Have Heard on High*. But, Jesus said that someday, we will be like angels.

Notice also that Jesus didn't say that we would be angels. It's not quite like the character of Clarence in the classic movie, *It's a Wonderful Life* (which is a great movie, but contains some bad theology). When we die, we don't go to heaven, where we have to earn our wings like Clarence did in the movie. This isn't true. We don't become angels. Rather, Jesus said that we would be "like angels."

In some ways, we are already like angels. There are some passages of Scripture in which angels come to the earth and look a lot like people. Angels came to Lot, and he did not realize that they were angels (Gen. 19:1-3). An angel came to visit Manoah, who "did not know that he was the angel of the LORD." (Judges 13:15-16). The writer to the Hebrews says that we ought to "show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb. 13:3). Angels can come and live among us, without us actually knowing that they are angels.

Furthermore, Angels have a mind and can reason and think and talk (Isaiah 6:3). Angels are aware of the things taking place on earth (1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:12). Angels have names and identities (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; 12:1). Angels willingly worship God (Psalm 148:1-2). Angels willingly serve God (Mat. 18:10). So, there are many similarities between what we are like and what the angels are like. But in other ways, we are not like angels. Angels never die (Luke 20:36). The holy angels have never sinned and never will sin. They have never needed to be redeemed (Heb. 2:16). Peter told us that the angels long to look upon the glories of salvation (1 Pet. 1:12).

And so, to be like angels, we need to change. Our bodies need to change, so that they would never die. Paul says that our bodies will change. He says that "this perishable will ... put on the imperishable, and this mortal will ... put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53). We will never die. To be like the holy angels, we need to be sinless. For those of us who believe in Christ, our bodies will be raised a spiritual body, which will never sin (1 Cor. 15:44). When Jesus appears, John tells us that "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). When Jesus appears, we will be sinless like Jesus and like the angels.

Our relationships will also change. This is the heart of verse 30. Jesus says here that there will be no marriage in heaven. If you are a married man, your wife will no longer be your wife in heaven. If you are a married woman, your husband will no longer be your husband in heaven. You might wonder why. There are several reasons. In heaven, there will be no more procreation. Children won't be born in heaven. Angels don't procreate. Somewhere in those first six days, God created all of the angels that would ever be. One of the purposes of marriage is to create offspring (Gen. 1:28). As there is no need for procreation in heaven, there is no need for marriage.

As I was reviewing my sermon notes on Saturday night with my family, I was struck with a sense of sadness. The thought of not being married to my dear wife was a sad thought. Now, for some, the thought of being released from marriage might cause you to exclaim, "Alleluia! I'm free!" But I'm saddened by the loss of pleasure and joy that I have in marriage. To think that we cannot enjoy each other forever is difficult to accept. And yet, we are promised in Ps. 16:11, "In your presence is fulness of joy; In your right hand there are pleasures forever." We will find more joy and satisfaction in God than we will ever find in our spouse.

I believe that we will know and recognize each other in heaven. There are many clues of this in the Bible. For instance, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Elijah and Moses were able to be recognized, though they had died many, many years before (Matthew 17:3). Jesus said that Abraham saw the day of Jesus and was glad (John 8:56). On another occasion, Jesus described the fate of two men in life and after their death (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man was in torment (Luke 16:24). Lazarus is said to be in Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). They recognized each other and had conversation relating to where they were. So, for those of you who are married, I believe that you will certainly recognize your husband or your wife in heaven, and you may even be great friends, but you will not be married. You will not cohabit

with them like you do now. You will be like the single folks among us. You will be concerned only about the things of the Lord (1 Cor. 7:23), as to how you might please Him.

I believe that this has a great implication for those of us who are married. Your relationship on earth with your spouse won't be forever. Your life here on earth with each other is simply one of preparation. Husband, you ought to live in such a way as to prepare your wife for the day when she is free to serve Jesus with no hindrance. Wife, you ought to live in such a way to prepare your husband for the day when he is free to serve His Lord. Doesn't this sound a bit like what Paul instructed the husbands in Ephesus to do? "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:25-27). Just as Jesus died to purify the church someday for Himself, so ought husbands to die to themselves and purify their wives for the day that she is presented to Jesus. Since the whole church is presented to Jesus, we should consider the aspect that wives ought to conduct themselves in such a way that they spurn their husbands to live on in holiness and purity as well.

So, husbands and wives, I encourage you to so conduct your marriage with an eye to the future. Think of the day when you willingly lose your spouse to the unabated service of Jesus. Foster in one another today, the things that will make that transition a joy for you and for your spouse. That is the state that we will find ourselves in forever. We train our children to be adults. We don't consider childhood to be the end. We find childhood to be the preparation for responsibility and living on their own. So also, we should be training ourselves to live eternally, as angels. This life is not the end. This life is the preparation for eternity to come.

As a parent of small children, I cannot count the number of times that I have heard others tell me, "Enjoy your children while they're young. For soon they will be out of the house." I believe that this is good advice not only for enjoying our children, but also for enjoying our marriage. For those of you who are married, I encourage you to live it up in your marriage. Enjoy it now, for it will soon be over.

For those of you who are single, there are great implications as well. Not being married in this age will in no ways hinder you in your service to your Lord in heaven. Someday, those of us who are married will all catch up to you and be single once more. We will be free to serve our Lord in ways that we aren't right now. In many ways, an unmarried Christian person is living right now the perfect existence that someday all married Christians will live. Jesus Christ, the most perfect man who ever walked the planet was single.

4. Do You Understand the Wisdom of Jesus? (verse 33)

I get this point from verse 33. This is one of the over-riding themes of the greater context. Verse 33 reads, "And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching." Our text today is the second in a series of three questions that Jesus answered. They weren't easy questions by any means. In fact, they were the most difficult questions that the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, or any other expert in the law might ask. And Jesus answered all of them with great wisdom and insight. And this wasn't a take-home exam. Jesus couldn't say, "Let me get back to you on that one" and take time to consult some books that might help him. No, every single one of them were answered right away, and without hesitation. In fact, they all were asked on the same day.

Look at how our passage begins. In verse 23, it says, "On that day ... some Sadducees ... came to [Jesus]." This time reference ties us back to the previous section in which Jesus responded to the Pharisees and Herodians, who tried to trap him with a question about paying taxes to Caesar. In fact, in the verses following our text this morning, we are led to believe that the next question posed to Jesus was during the same setting. For, in verse 34, we read, "when the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ..." (verses 34-35).

Of further notice is the brevity of His answers. It takes more skill to speak a short answer than it does to speak a long answer. In every instance, Jesus answered their question with but a few short statements. In these few words, Jesus not only answered the question, but also convicted those who asked the question of their own sin.

Jesus took this most difficult oral examination and passed it with flying colors. In fact, Jesus did so well that none would "dare from that day on to ask Him another question" (verse 46).

What took place here is so similar to what took place as Jesus walked the earth. He always knew how to respond to those coming to Him. He always had the right word on His tongue. He always knew what to say. He always knew how to say it. To the downcast, Jesus gave encouragement. To the inquirer, Jesus gave them what they needed. To the antagonist, Jesus responded with grace and truth. Indeed, Jesus fulfilled the Proverb like none of us have ever done: "How delightful is a timely word!" (Proverbs 15:23).

Jesus is the same today. He knows how to respond. He knows how to help. He knows the answers to the difficult questions of life. I know that in my mind, there are many questions that I have, which I cannot answer. There are theological questions. There are practical questions. There are circumstantial questions that I simply don't have an answer to. But, I know that Jesus does. I would guess that I am no different than many of you. You ask questions about why your wife and mother were taken from you. You ask why you grew up in the non-Christian home that you did, facing all of the difficulties in your life that such an environment has caused. You ask why you have been afflicted with a debilitating illness. You ask how God can be absolutely sovereign over all the affairs of men, and yet, still hold them responsible for their actions. You ask of the future, "when will Christ return?" You ask, "What exactly will happen when He returns?"

With all of your questions, you can come to Jesus as these Sadducees did, doubting and testing and demanding from Jesus an answer. When you do this, you are doubting the wisdom of Jesus that He has been putting on display in answering His opponents. Or, you can take a different approach. You can come humbly, realizing that Jesus knows the answer. The wisdom of Jesus is unsurpassed. He knows all mysteries. In Colossians 2:3, we are told that in Jesus "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." You can ask Jesus any question that you want, and He has the answer.

Jesus may choose to give you an answer to your question. Or, He may choose not to give you answer. He may chose to remain silent as He

was before Pilate (John 19:10). And in some instances, of the mysteries of life, God has chosen to remain silent. In other instances, God has chosen to reveal to them to us. Deuteronomy 29:29 gives a great perspective, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

There is enough in the Bible to know, follow and obey. Even if you don't get all of your theological questions answered or your "why" questions answered, know that Jesus has the answer and can be trusted with that answer. Isn't this the thrust of this passage? Jesus has the answer to every question, regardless of how difficult it is. He can answer with simplicity, brevity, and accuracy in such a way as to convict our hearts of our sin. Jesus is worthy of being trusted. He can be trusted beyond all measure.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 5, 2004 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] You must notice that Jesus argues His point based upon the tense of the Hebrew verb. It shows you the extent to which Jesus believed that the Old Testament was inspired. Someday, I plan on preaching a message entitled, "How does Jesus view the Scripture?" which would detail how Jesus viewed the Old Testament. He always viewed its teaching as authoritative, inspired and inerrant. He knew the Old Testament very well, using it to strengthen Him during temptation. Often Jesus would speak about the Scripture being fulfilled. Never did He ever cast doubt about its accuracy, which is the point here in Matthew 22:32.

[2] I found this quote all over the internet, but was unable to locate the original location.