

Stuff About Things: Questions

By Robert F. Turner (Oct. 1979)

If you think the brethren at large can ask provocative questions, you should try to teach third year college students—who have learned to question everything, are too smart for a "snow" job, and think you must unscrew the inscrutable. At times one may be tempted to become facetious. "Why did not Jacob know he had the wrong woman the night of his marriage (Gen. 29:23-25)?" Reply: "The nights are very dark in Palestine."

We are tempted, I repeat, but we need not yield. Nor should we pontificate—act like we know, and say it so positively the querist would not dare argue. If we really believe our position is secure, we can afford to be gracious. And most reprehensible are those who, feeling their traditions threatened, classify the querist as "heretic," and drive the matter underground to smolder and build heat for a later breaking forth.

Not all questions are honest. The Bible and our experience prove this. Nor are we able to infallibly judge the hearts of others. Too, an honest question does not mean the querist wants the truth one has to offer. If one suspects this may be the case the first reply can be cautiously given—perhaps another question, to clarify, and to lead the querist to be more receptive.

Above all, keep the communication intact, for honest questions are open doors to an ideal learning situation. "Learning begins with a felt difficulty," and people learn what they want to learn. The teacher who understands this is more concerned with creating interest and stirring an awareness of needs than in stuffing information into unwilling heads.

I'm convinced much of our preaching has failed because we try to tell folks what they must do to be saved before they are made to realize that they are lost. We are trying to answer questions they do not ask, and fill needs they do not feel. Our subject matter may be appropriate, but we need a better introduction.

An honest question may have been long in coming, requiring a build-up of courage and a willingness to admit the need for an answer. If we handle it abruptly, we may slam the door in the face of a truth seeker. So, if someone asks, "How come the Jews had to rent a veil for the temple?" you must swallow hard and say, "Perhaps we should look at that more closely."

Fixating on What's Important: *Protesting Unfair Comparisons*

By Bill Fix

I saw an illustration recently contrasting the quote "Destruction of property is not a valid form of protest" with a depiction of Jesus flipping over the moneychangers' tables in the temple. Whoever created this meme was advocating that protesters who riot, loot, and burn other people's stores, vehicles, and sundry private property should be justified because Jesus did something "similar" in the gospel accounts. Furthermore, Christians who complain about this are hypocrites. Such apparently passes for "intellectual discourse" on social media in 2020...

I don't believe this a fair comparison. Jesus was justified in overturning the tables of the entrepreneurs, scattering their goods and money all over the temple floor, because they did not have a legitimate right to be where they were. Those selling doves and exchanging currency were present because some people would have traveled great distances to worship at the temple, and it would be more convenient for them to purchase their sacrifice on site. Deut. 14:24-25 even authorized the practice of moneychangers and vendors selling sacrificial animals.

However, that business should have been conducted in the marketplace, not within the temple grounds. This is why Jesus told them, "My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves'" (Mt. 21:13). When we come together to worship, it should be for that purpose, not for commerce. Jewish society had gotten so casual that it allowed the businesses to set up shop inside God's house.

When Jesus overturned the tables, I assert that He wasn't destroying property as a form of protest—instead, He was evicting trespassing businesses who had turned a worship zone into a commercial district. Moreover, He was acting on behalf of His Father, the "homeowner".

Regardless, an honest look at our heart and motivations should be profitable in light of this comparison. Multiple passages command us to love and respect all, which would include not stealing or acting out of anger or malice (Eph. 4:28, 31). God expects all mankind to love our fellow man (1 Jn. 4:20), yes, even placing our neighbor (Lk. 10:29) above our personal property. Furthermore, we must also be wary of "untaught and unstable people [who] twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:16).