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Who is this?

A large circular graphic with a grey border. The top arc contains the text "Questions asked by Bible characters". The center features a cartoon man in a suit holding large red letters "Q" and "A" with a red ampersand "&" between them. Above the letters is the word "MY". The bottom arc contains the text "My answers" and the quote "I am the truth". "God's word is truth".

Introduction

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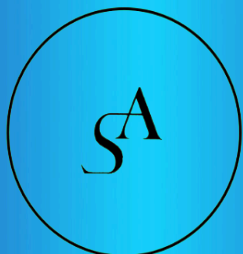
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Who is this? This question was asked multiple times by people about Jesus - by political leaders, and religious leaders, and by ordinary citizens. In this MyQ&A 6, we'll consider three of them.

The curiosity of the political leader (Luke 9:1-9, Matthew 14:1-12).

Herod said, "***John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?***" And he tried to see him.

This is Herod Antipas, the third son of Herod the Great. "Antipas" is a compound of *anti* (against), and *pas* (all or everyone), a personality of a wicked ruler who was against everything and everyone. He was ruler of Galilee and Peraea (located on the east bank of the Jordan) from 4 BC.

By participating in national Jewish celebrations Herod tried to appeal to the Jewish people, but they were not convinced and viewed him as an insincere fraud. Even Jesus compared Herod to a fox, an unclean animal usually infected with sickness and the very epitome of trickery. For Jesus, Herod was a sneaky, lying, deceiving, dishonest, infected, and sick man.

Herod divorced his first wife to marry Herodias his sister-in-law and niece. Herod may have thought that it was lawful because of his own civil authority, but he violated God's law (Leviticus 18:6, 16, 20:21, Mark 10:12). John condemned Herod, not to make his life miserable, but to save him. However, Herod sought to put John to death (Matthew 14:5), and eventually did so.

This did not stop the work of God, and Jesus and His apostles kept preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, and showing by His miracles what kingdom life would look like. Repenting of sin and believing the good news would secure a place in the kingdom. It was not advice that Herod accepted. He just wanted to see this miracle worker and be wowed by His power. He eventually got the opportunity when Jesus was sent to him by Pontius Pilate, but Jesus said nothing and did nothing before him (Luke 23:6-12). He never did get an answer to his question, ***who is this?*** There is no answer for the curious who seek entertainment but who are are not serious.

The religiosity of the Jewish leaders (Luke 5:17-26, Mark 2:1-12)).

When He returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. Just then four men came, carrying a paralysed man on a stretcher. When he saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, ***Who is this?***

Jesus was 'at home', probably at Peter's house on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee. First-century rooves in Galilee were usually flat, consisting of sycamore or cypress timber beams, set into the walls about 2-2½m high, supporting branches, straw or reeds with a thick layer of mud plaster. Access was made by exterior stairs at the side, and here the family would often sleep on the roof in summer or use it to dry raisins, figs, flax, etc., in the sun. A parapet was to be built as a safety precaution. The rooftop was also a place of worship, either for Baal and especially the host of heaven (Jeremiah. 19:13; Zephaniah. 1:5). It was also the place where Peter prayed when he was in Joppa (Acts 10:9). Here the paralysed man on his stretcher and his four carriers made their entry because the crowds prevented access through the front door. The diagrammes on the next page illustrate a typical house structure of the time.

The religiosity of the Jewish leaders continued

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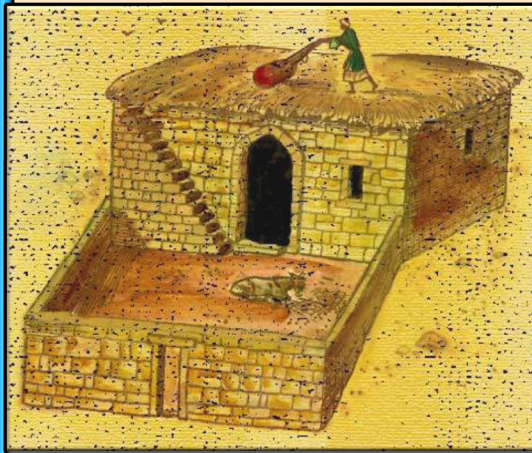
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Note that Jesus responded to the faith of the five men ('their faith'), not just the faith of the paralysed man. 'Sins forgiven'. 'Sin' means a missing of the mark or a failure to hit the bull's-eye. *'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'* (Romans 3:23). 'Forgive' means to send away, to release from one's power or concern. This man's paralysis was due to his sins (compare with the lame man of John 5:14).

"Scribe" doesn't mean "professional copyist," but rather an "expert in the teaching and interpretation of Moses' law". Pharisees were one of the most influential religious and political parties of Judaism in the time of Jesus numbering more than 6,000. The Pharisees were strict and zealous adherents to the laws of Moses. These religious leaders asked *Who is this?* accusing Jesus of engaging in blasphemy, of dishonouring God because He was making a claim to divine prerogative, and usurping God's majesty. This question, which arose out of their religiosity, was not asked out loud, but in their hearts. It was detected by Him Who can read men's thoughts.

The Lord's reply asserted His authority as the Son of Man to forgive, for He referred to Daniel 7:13, which mixes human and divine images as the man in Daniel rides a cloud, something only God does. With that, He commanded the man to rise and go home. And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, *"We have never seen anything like this!"* Man's religiosity was answered, and silenced by the words and miraculous act of Jesus the Son of Man who has eternal ruling authority, honour, and sovereignty, over all peoples.

The animosity of citizens (Matthew 21:10).

As Jesus entered Jerusalem it was thrown into an uproar, asking, *Who is this?* 'Uproar' means describes a mind disturbed by anger, or other emotions, and our English word *seismic* (earthquake) comes from this word). Jerusalem was very disturbed by Jesus entering the city.

A millennium before, David tried to conquer Jerusalem, but the Jebusites mocked that even the **blind** and the **lame** would turn him back (2 Samuel 5:6-8). They didn't, he David defeated them militarily. Interestingly, the only cases that Jesus healed in Jerusalem were the **blind**, and the **lame** (John 5, 9, Matthew 21:14). The blind was cured at the Jewish Siloam pool, and the lame at the Gentile pagan pool of Asclepius the god of healing. Jesus healed them spiritually too. He is the Saviour of Jew and Gentile, and greater than all gods.

Jerusalem was hostile to Him and wanted to deny Him entry as the Jebusites did. So, while Jesus didn't take Jerusalem militarily, He was victorious physically and spiritually for those who embraced Him.

The question *Who is this?* was asked out of *animosity*, and their answer "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth" was wide of the mark. The Lord demonstrated that He had heaven's authority.

Conclusion

It's ok to ask the question, *Who is this?* but make sure that you have the right answer. Curiosity,

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