

The Bible Journey – Great Questions

Matthew 11-19

QUESTION 1

Scripture: ² Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴ And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” Matthew 11:2-6

Question: Matthew 11:6 What did Jesus mean when he said "God blesses those who do not fall away because of me"?

Response

The context of this verse is John the Baptist, while in prison, sending a disciple to Jesus to inquire if Jesus is the expected Messiah. John would have been fully aware of who Jesus was and the mission of Jesus. Yet, in this moment of suffering, I believe he is looking for assurance.

In response, Jesus tells the disciples of John to simply note what they have seen: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are healed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor receive the Gospel. In other words, John, you can take assurance from not just the things you have heard but the things Jesus has done. In all ways, Jesus reflects the Scriptural image of the Messiah.

Jesus then encourages John in verse 6. “John, do not be offended or stumble in your faith.” Remain faithful and strong. Many will stumble over Christ’s claims of Messiahship. John, don’t be one of those people. In the verses that follow, Jesus goes on to praise and honor John for his work in preparing the way for the Messiah.

QUESTION 2

Scripture: ²¹ After going out from there, Jesus went to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

²² A Canaanite woman from that area came and cried out, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is horribly demon-possessed!" ²³ But he did not answer her a word. Then his disciples came and begged him, "Send her away, because she keeps on crying out after us." ²⁴ So he answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and bowed down before him and said, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs," he said. ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, your faith is great! Let what you want be done for you." And her daughter was healed from that hour.

Matthew 15:21-28

Question: This whole paragraph is troubling. Jesus does not speak to the woman, His disciples want to send her away, then Jesus does speak to her. Jesus' answer does not make sense.

Response

A cursory reading would lead us to think Jesus is being harsh to the woman but that is not the case. The woman is described as a Canaanite or Gentile, but a Gentile with an unusual amount of faith. Notice also, she addresses Jesus as "Lord, Son of David". Those are Messianic words. Apparently, this woman had some knowledge of who Jesus was.

She somehow finds out where Jesus is eating and approaches with a request that Jesus heal her demon possessed daughter who has remained at home. Somehow, she manages to overcome the disciples attempts to keep her away, and makes it into the presence of Christ. Her conversation with Jesus is actually very beautiful. In verse 24, Jesus seems to dismiss the woman and her request. Jesus states that He has come for the lost sheep of Israel.

Now in His presence, she pleads her case. Jesus' response needs some explanation. In a typical family, the children are fed before the household pet or dog. Jesus uses that as an example to communicate that He came for Israel first, not the Gentiles.

The woman, however, is more perceptive than most of Jesus' listeners for she catches the implication of His example. She takes notice that Jesus says to feed the children then the pets. Perhaps she grabs hold of this and thinks, "this implies an order not an exclusion". Yes, the children eat first, but the dogs do get to eat as well.

Second, she forms her response by calling Jesus Lord. This is a recognition of the authority of Jesus. She puts these together in a request that even though she may receive less, she STILL RECEIVES. And she is asking only for a morsel of the power and authority of Jesus...because that will be sufficient.

Jesus responds to her insight, her faith and her heart. Perhaps all along Jesus has been slowly drawing out her faith to both affirm her and to communicate to the disciples that the mission of Christ is for Jews and Gentiles. Later, when Gentiles read this story, their hearts rejoice that Christ is for them as well.

QUESTION 3

Scripture: *²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”* Matthew 16:24-28

Question: Please explain to me how this works out as Jesus' original disciples, whom he was speaking to at the time, have all long since passed away from this earth and Jesus hasn't returned yet.

Response

Jesus' comment about not tasting death refers back to verse 25. He is saying that although some of those who follow Him will lose their lives for His sake, some of them would see a manifestation of the coming kingdom before they faced martyrdom, because to see Jesus in His glory is to see a preview of that day when He will return to reign.

What's remarkable about this saying is that it occurs in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and is immediately by the transfiguration of Jesus. Peter, who was the one on the mountain with Jesus during the transfiguration, in his second epistle, treats this experience of the transfiguration on the mountain with Jesus as a preview of the second coming — a validation, we would say today a movie trailer, of the second coming.

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son,^[1] with whom I am well pleased,” 2 Peter 1:16–17

These verses seem to have Peter referring to the power and the coming of the Lord as a preview experienced on the Mount of Transfiguration, which means that what Jesus was saying was that some of his disciples, namely Peter, James and John, would not die before they glimpsed Jesus in His divine form or the form He will have when He returns. This happened at the transfiguration.

QUESTION 4

Scripture: ¹And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. Matthew 17:1-2

Question: What is the purpose of the transfiguration of Jesus.

Response

1. It is a response to Matthew 16:28. *Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.* Peter, James and John saw Christ in His kingdom form.
2. Matthew 17:2 describes the brilliance of Christ to demonstrate that He was more than just a teacher, rabbi or miracle worker, but the Son of God.
3. A reference to Matthew 5:17, *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.* Moses represented the Law since he was the one through whom the Law was given. Elijah represented the prophets of the Old Testament, especially in the sense that he ascended directly to heaven without dying on earth.
4. Matthew 17:5, when the Father speaks, serves to declare that Christ is the Son of God and Messiah and therefore, should be obeyed. Also, the Father's words show that the Law and the Prophets must give way to Jesus. Jesus is the new replacing the old.
5. Matthew 17:9 is referenced in 2 Peter 1:16-18, ¹⁶ *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.* Peter refers to the transfiguration as a defining moment, although not fully grasped in the moment, in Peter's life and the ministry he gave his life to.

QUESTION 5

Scripture: ²⁸ *Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28*

Question: Are the 12 disciples sitting on thrones in heaven judging Israel? Is the 12th disciple Judas?

Response

The context of Matthew 19 places this verse within a dialogue Jesus was having with the disciples regarding a rich man who sought Christ. Jesus says it is difficult for rich people to enter the kingdom because their wealth is a strong idol. In response to Peter’s statement that they have left everything, Jesus draws their attention to the eternal. They may have left everything while on earth, but they will gain so much more in heaven.

Luke 22:28-30 describes the same conversation and locates it in the broader discussion of the disciples wondering who was the greatest.

So, the context is Jesus affirming to the disciples that their current ‘sacrifices’ of the temporary world would be rewarded with so much more in the final day of Christ. The Apostle John offers us this in Revelation 21 when describing the new Jerusalem.

"It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" Revelation 21:12-14

Jesus has revealed to these men that they will have more than just treasure in heaven. They will occupy thrones and positions of great responsibility and power alongside Jesus. The disciples will be given authority to judge the 12 tribes. What does this judgement look like? We are not told but a common thought is not so much judgment as in passing judgement on behavior, but the distribution of rewards and fellowship in light of obedience.

Now to your question, “Who was the 12 disciple who will sit on a throne?” I do not believe Judas will be that person. In Acts 1:15-26, Judas was gone, having gone out and hung himself. In response the disciples seek to replace Judas and Matthias is chosen and was “numbered with the eleven apostles”.