

The Bible Journey – Great Questions

Matthew 20-28

QUESTION 1

Scripture: ¹Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Matthew 21:1-7

Question: What is the significance of Jesus riding on a donkey/colt, besides fulfilling Zech 9:9? Did He ride both?

Response

First, you are correct that part of the significance is the tie to Zechariah 9:9. That is another instance of Matthew connecting the Old Testament descriptions of the Messiah to Jesus.

Second, while it is a bit unclear, most commentators seem to think that Jesus rode on the colt. The thought is the Zechariah passage employs Hebrew parallelism; the second line explains the first. Thus, there was a donkey which was a colt.

Mark 11:2, Luke 19:30 and John 12:14 refer only to a colt on which no one had ever ridden.

Therefore, it seems most likely Matthew is connecting to the Zechariah passage and the Hebrew language of that passage while Mark, Luke and John are describing what physically occurred.

QUESTION 2

Scripture: *They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, Matthew 23:5*

Question: What are phylacteries?

Response

Phylacteries were small leather or parchment boxes containing a piece of vellum inscribed with texts from the Law. They were worn on the arm and tied to the forehead (see Exodus 13:9,16; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18).

The purpose was to remind the Israelite that they were to know God's Law (forehead) and obey God's Law (arm). It was a tangible way to remind them to be spiritually obedient and faithful.

To show off their piety, some religious leaders would make large, showy phylacteries. The goal being to call attention to themselves and their piety. Pretty much the whole chapter is Jesus calling down a series of woes directed at the outward focus on the religious leaders while completely ignoring their heart.

Originally the phylacteries were worn all day and removed at night. In more recent Jewish practice, they are worn only during morning prayers.

Morning prayer

Phylacteries, called tefillin in Hebrew, are worn by observant Jewish men each weekday morning during prayer.

A reminder

- Two small leather boxes contain verses from the first books of the Bible; boxes are attached to leather straps

One tied to arm,
the other placed
on head

- Worn as a reminder of God and to follow Jewish law daily
- Removed at conclusion of morning prayer services

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QUESTION 3

Scripture: ³ Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." ⁵ And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. Matthew 27:3-5

Question: How did Judas die and did he freely choose to betray Jesus?

Response

The death of Judas was a suicide committed after he was filled with remorse (but not repentance) for his betrayal of Jesus. Matthew says that Judas died by hanging. Luke says that Judas fell into a field and that his body ruptured. Here is the account in Acts: *"With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood".* Acts 1:18-19

Concerning how Judas died, here is a simple reconciliation of the facts: Judas hanged himself in the potter's field (Matthew 27:5) and that is how he died. Then, after his body had begun to decay and bloat, the rope broke, or the branch of the tree he was using broke, and his body fell, bursting open on the land of the potter's field (Acts 1:18-19). Note that Luke does not say that Judas died from the fall, only that his body fell. The Acts passage presumes Judas's hanging, as a man falling in a field does not normally result in his body bursting open. Only decomposition and a fall from a height could cause a body to burst open. So, Matthew mentions the actual cause of death, and Luke focuses more on the horror surrounding it.

Jesus chose Judas Iscariot as one of the 12 disciples. Judas was "a devil" (John 6:70-71), "a thief" (John 12:6), and an unbeliever (John 6:64), yet he held a respected position within the group). Since Jesus "knew what was in each person".

Jesus chose Judas as a disciple because, ultimately, Judas fit into the plan of God. One of the reasons Jesus chose Judas was that prophecy had to be fulfilled. Speaking of His imminent betrayal, Jesus says, "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him" (Matthew 26:24).

So, Jesus chose Judas to fulfill prophecy and because the plan of God required someone to betray the innocent Son of Man. However, none of this means that Judas and others who condemned and crucified Jesus were without fault. Judas Iscariot bore the responsibility for what *he* chose to do. Jesus said, "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born" (Mark 14:21).

Judas, like all people, have free will within the sovereignty of God. While God knew Judas would be the betrayer, Judas chose his path willingly and freely.

QUESTION 4

Scripture: ⁵¹ *And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.* ⁵² *The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised,* ⁵³ *and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.* ⁵⁴ *When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"* Matthew 27:51-54

Question: Did the "Godly men and women who were raised from the dead and left the cemetery, after Jesus' resurrection", physically (in human form) go into Jerusalem and appear to many people? Or were they appearing to people as spirits? If they were in human form, what happened to them after they appeared to people in Jerusalem (since they were previously already dead)? Did they just continue living on until they died again?

Response

I think this text is a preview of what awaits in the final resurrection. Therefore, the bodies would have been like those in the resurrection. The bodies are in human form but are now eternal in design as described in 1 Corinthians. While the text does not tell us where they went after appearing to many, the thought would be that they went to the dwelling place of God, just like will happen in the final resurrection.

⁴² *So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.* ⁴³ *It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.* ⁴⁴ *It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.* 1 Corinthians 15:42-44

⁵⁰ *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.* ⁵¹ *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,* ⁵² *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* ⁵³ *For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.* ⁵⁴ *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵ *"O death, where is your victory?*

O death, where is your sting?"

1 Corinthians 15:50-55