

The Bible Journey – Great Questions

Mark

QUESTION 1

Scripture: ¹⁵ *And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.* ¹⁶ *And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”* ¹⁷ *And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”* Mark 2:15-17

Question: Who was Jesus referring to in Mark 2:17 when He said He came to call not the righteous, but sinners. If we are born sinners, who then we're the righteous he was referring to?

Response

First, notice that this statement comes at the end of a paragraph, therefore the previous verses give us some insight to what Jesus was saying. Verse 17 is the summary of verses 15-16.

Jesus is eating a meal at the home of Matthew (see verses 13-14). At the meal are many of Matthew's friends, sinners by the definition of the religious leaders, some of whom were also present. The Pharisees, seeing that Jesus is eating with sinners, accuse him of breaking the Jewish Law.

First, the Pharisees did get one thing correct. Matthew and his friends were sinners. Second, the Pharisees got something wrong. They did not consider themselves sinners, but the righteous. The Pharisees saw themselves as righteous, and they perceived that their righteousness was the result of law-keeping and keeping themselves free from defilement from sinners. Jesus was breaking all the rules, so far as they could see.

When Jesus heard the response of the Pharisees, He poses them an example. Who needs a physician? Sick people or healthy people? Obviously, those who are sick. Jesus then says, “I did not come to call those, like the Pharisees, who think they are righteous (healthy), but those who know themselves to be sinners (sick).” The only difference between the tax-collectors and Pharisees, was the tax-collectors knew they needed redeemed while the Pharisees already thought themselves redeemed.

QUESTION 2

Scripture: *And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach...* Mark 3:14

Question: I see that Mark was not a disciple of Jesus. Was he just a groupie who followed him? How did he get to know Jesus and who he was?

Response

¹⁰ *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him)...* Colossians 4:10

- Mark was the cousin of Barnabas and a co-worker with Paul.

She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. 1 Peter 5:13

- Peter considered Mark a son in the faith which means he would have access to the life of Jesus in first-person testimony. It is thought that Mark would have drawn heavily upon the information of Peter.

Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. 2 Timothy 4:11

- Paul asked for Mark to come to him showing a strong personal and ministry connection.

QUESTION 3

Scripture: ³⁵ While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷ And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³ And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat. Mark 5:35-43

Question: Why didn't Jesus want anyone to know? The little girl was dead, not sleeping when he arose her?

Response

The Scripture does not tell us overtly why Jesus said to keep the miracle quiet. The only people allowed in the room were Peter, James, John, and the child's parents. Perhaps the disciples were allowed in as witnesses. Not in the sense of a courtroom but as witnesses who could remember and testify to its veracity after Jesus leaves earth. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the miracle.

A second potential reason is simply the compassion of Christ for the family. Raising people from the dead has a way of attracting attention. Perhaps Jesus is protecting the family from the 'craziness' that would have come upon the family.

Finally, it is consistent through the Gospels that while Jesus publicly does miracles, that He also sought to prevent people from believing in Him simply because they wanted or saw a miracle. The miracles were intended to demonstrate that He was Messiah but were not the basis for saving faith. That is Christ alone.

QUESTION 4

Scripture: *⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, ⁵⁰ for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." ⁵¹ And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵² **for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.*** Mark 6:45-52

Question: The disciples just saw Jesus walk on water, in Matthew, this where Peter gets out of the boat and tries to walk to Jesus. I am confused to Mark's wording that the disciples hearts were hardened.

Response

Mark is the only writer to make this note in regard to the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 and the calming of the sea. Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell both stories but only Mark notes that the disciples did not understand the significance of what Jesus did in feeding the 5000 and only Mark gives a reason for this, their hearts were as yet hard or dull.

In Mark's narrative, the disciples up to this point are experiencing things but not putting them together yet. In other words, this is early in the ministry of Jesus and while the disciples 'get' that Someone unique has arrived, they do not yet fully grasp who Jesus is, thus verse 52.

Note the this follows directly after the feeding of the 5000. Jesus sends the disciples across the lake while He goes up to the mountain to pray. For the disciples, it's sort of a 'out of the fire into the frying pan' moment. They have no time to process what just happened when they are once again facing something they have never experienced before. That's a lot to process in the moment. Their hearts are hard or calloused but the callouses are slowly being removed. I think we must give the disciples time to 'figure things out' when stuff is happening so fast. And the good news is, they eventually do!

I think the disciples are much like the rest of people. Time has calloused our hearts and it takes time to remove the layers of unbelief.

QUESTION 5

Scripture: ¹² *On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. ¹³ And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.* Mark 11:12-14

Question: In Mark 11, Jesus curses the fig tree for not having figs and yet it wasn't the season for the figs. Then in Mark 13:28-31 we are to learn the lesson of the fig tree. Exactly, what lesson is that since He already cursed the fig tree?

Response

As they were making the short walk back to Jerusalem on Monday morning, Jesus is hungry and notices a fig tree. The fig tree had nice green leaves but no figs. Fig trees in Palestine would produce small edible buds in March followed by large green leaves in April. These small buds were common food for peasants. If left untouched, these small buds would produce figs in May. The fact that there were no buds indicated that the fig tree would produce no fruit that year. In response, Jesus curses the tree.

Jesus then heads into the temple, forms a whip, and drives out the money changers who had turned the temple into a place of business rather than a place to worship God.

Verses 20-25 pick up the cursing of the fig tree as they walk by it on Tuesday morning. They once again notice the fig tree and take note that it is now dead all the way to the roots. It is important to note that the fig tree is cursed, not reformed or cleansed. The fact that Jesus makes such a big deal out this should be a challenge to the reader that this about more than just a fig tree. The temple cleansing and the fig show they are connected.

The barrenness of the fig tree reflects the spiritual barrenness Jesus found in the temple. The temple was a place to connect with God, to repent of sin, and to proclaim your love for God. Instead, it had become a place to just to business so you could fulfill some religious ritual. Both had died to their very roots. They did not need to be reformed but destroyed so that true worship of God would happen.

After Peter notices the fig tree, Jesus responds with a short teaching on prayer and faith. Notice that Jesus does not say mountains, but “this mountain”. Jesus is most likely referring to the temple mount, Mount Zion. It is also interesting to note that Jesus says this mountain will be thrown into the sea. The sea is where the pigs infested with demons were drowned in Mark 5 and the place where those who caused the little ones to stumble would be thrown in Mark 9.

The temple was a place of immense importance and the place where God should be most worshiped and most glorified. Instead, it has become a place that needs to be destroyed and replaced by worshippers centered not on a place, but on a Person. Do you see how this foreshadows the resurrection and the advent of the Holy Spirit.

So, if the temple is no longer the center of worship but instead worship is focused on the Person of Christ, what else will change? Jesus answers that. Faith and prayer will be focused on a relationship with Christ. The forgiveness that was once sought through sacrificing an animal in the temple will be replaced by seeking forgiveness through Christ and forgiving others as Christ has forgiven you. That my friends is some beautiful stuff.

Mark 13:28-31

²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Jesus grabs the experience and applies it to the struggles that are to come. The shoots on the branches let us know summer is approaching. Jesus turns that to look ahead and says that when you see the things from verses 1-27, know that the end is near. “This generation”, I believe, is a reference to the suffering they can expect. In contrast to the temporary suffering they will experience, Christ’s words will last forever.

QUESTION 6

Scripture: Mark 13

Question: When and how does the temple get destroyed? Are the later verses talking about the rapture and tribulation and when Jesus returns?

Response

The destruction of the Temple was the culmination of a large-scale Jewish revolt against Roman rule that began in 66 CE. The Romans besieged Jerusalem and after a prolonged and bloody siege, the city and its sacred Temple were conquered by the Roman General Titus.

There are nineteen imperatives in verses 5-37. This makes it abundantly clear that the main purpose of the discourse is not to satisfy curiosity about the future but to give practical, ethical teaching. In this discourse Jesus combines eschatology with exhortation, with the emphasis on exhortation. He is preparing his disciples-and beyond them the church-to live and to witness in a hostile world. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8, Page 742 (Walter Wessel).

All that said, I think the focus is not on trying to determine the order of future events, but the essential need to live fully for Christ each day in an ever-increasing evil world. Personally, I think these words of Christ are more focused on the destruction of the temple and the aftereffects than a long future interpretation.

QUESTION 7

Scripture: ³³ *And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.* ³⁴ *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* Mark 15:33-34

Question: Why does Jesus say, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”

Response

The honest answer to your question is, “We don’t really know what Christ experienced in that moment and what it meant to Him to separated from the Father, even for a moment.”

A common approach to answer this is to say that in that moment Christ took on the full weight of the sins of humanity and God the Father, being perfectly holy, turned from Christ so that Christ could pay the full penalty of humanity’s sin. Maybe.

The prophet Isaiah says, “Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-5).

Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). He was made a sin-offering, and He died in our place, on our account, that He might bring us near to God. This no doubt intensified His sufferings and may be part of the reason Jesus uttered these words. It was the manifestation of God’s hatred of sin, in some unexplained way, that Jesus experienced in that terrible hour. The suffering He endured was due to us, and it is that suffering by which we can be saved from eternal death.

In those awful moments, as evil men were allowed to do whatever they wanted to Jesus, our Lord expressed His feelings of abandonment. God placed the sins of the world on His Son, and Jesus for a time felt the desolation of being apart from His Father’s presence.

QUESTION 8

Scripture: Mark 15

Question: Was Jesus' mother Mary and father Joseph not at his crucifixion

Response

The answer is found in John's Gospel.

²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved (The disciple John) standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. John 19:25-27

In the multiple times Jesus interacts with his family (Mark 3:20-21; Matthew 12:46-50; John 7:3-6) Joseph is never mentioned. Jewish custom would have listed his name if he was present. The common thought is that by the time Jesus began His ministry, Joseph had died.