

Philosophy 1600: Philosophy of Religion

Answers to Exercise 3: The Gospel According to Matthew

Reading: *The Gospel According to Matthew.*

I. Some Attitudes and Beliefs of Jesus

1. Was the idea of people suffering eternal torment in hell invented by the Catholic Church, or did Jesus himself believe in hell?

Jesus himself believed that some people would suffer eternal torment in hell.

Two supporting passages are (1) Matthew 25:41 and (2) Matthew 25:46

Other supporting passages are: Matthew 7:13-4, Matthew 13:40-2, Matthew 18:8-9, and Matthew 22:13-4.

Slightly less explicit passages are: Matthew 5:22, Matthew 5:30, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 13:50, Matthew 13:40-3, Matthew 18:34-5. Matthew 23:23

2. Did Jesus give any indication of what proportion of people might wind up in hell, and if so, what?

Jesus believed that the majority of the human race would wind up in hell.

Two supporting passages are (1) Matthew 7:13-4 and (2) Matthew 22:13-4

Slightly less explicit passages are: Matthew 24:40-1 and Matthew 25:1-11

3. Did Jesus have any beliefs concerning the cause of epilepsy, or any other illnesses?

Jesus believed that some illnesses were caused by demonic possession. In particular, he seems to have believed that epilepsy, madness, and loss of speech were sometimes caused by demonic possession.

Two supporting passages are (1) Matthew 8:28-33 and (2) Matthew 17:14-20

Other supporting passages are: Matthew 4:24-5, Matthew 9:32-3, Matthew 10:1, Matthew 12:22.

A passage that does not explicitly refer to Jesus's own belief is: Matthew 8:16.

4. What did Jesus say would happen at his Second Coming, when he returned to earth at some future point in time? (Note that the two expressions, "the Second Coming" and "the resurrection of Jesus", are supposed to refer to different events.)

Jesus said that he would come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, that he would send out his angels who would gather the elect from all over the world. Jesus would

then sit on a throne and pass a final judgment on everyone, separating people into those who will go to heaven, and those who will go to hell.

Two supporting passages are (1) Matthew 13:49-50 and (2) Matthew 25:31-42

Other supporting passages are: Matthew 16:27-8 and Matthew 24:3-44, especially 24:30-1.

5. Did Jesus claim to know exactly when his Second Coming would take place?

No, he said that while God the Father knew the day and hour when the Second Coming would take place, no one else did, including the Son of Man.

A supporting passage is (1) Matthew 24:36

6. Did Jesus provide any indication of approximately how soon his Second Coming would take place?

Yes, he indicated that it would take place soon, since it was to take place before the disciples had gone through all the towns of Israel, before the present generation had passed away, and before all those listening to him had died.

Three supporting passages are (1) Matthew 10:23 , (2) Matthew 16:27-8 , and (3) Matthew 24:3-44, esp. 24:33

7. What view did Jesus advance on sex before marriage?

Jesus held that sex before marriage was something that *defiled* a person.

A supporting passage is (1) Matthew 15:19-20

Other relevant passages are: Matthew 5:27-30 and Matthew 19:12

8. Did Jesus teach that God would forgive any sin, if one sincerely repented? No, Jesus taught that there was one a sin - the sin against the Holy Spirit - that God would never forgive.

A supporting passage is (1) Matthew 12:32

9. What was Jesus's attitude toward those who did not accept his teaching, or the teaching of his disciples?

Jesus said that his disciples should shake off the dust from their feet as they left any town where people refused to listen to his disciples, and he said that the Day of Judgment would be more bearable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for those that rejected his teaching.

Two supporting passages are (1) Matthew 10:14-5 and (2) Matthew 11:20-4

Another relevant passage is Matthew 7:26

10. Christianity teaches that Jesus's death is an atoning sacrifice, without which it would not be possible for God to forgive people their sins. Did Jesus accept this idea that his own death would be an atoning sacrifice?

Yes, Jesus did accept the idea that his death was an atoning sacrifice that would pay for the sins of others.

The clearest supporting passages is (1) Matthew 20:28

Another supporting passage is Matthew 26:28.

A passage that does not explicitly refer to Jesus's own belief is: Matthew 1:21.

11. Some Christian churches teach that there will be a Final Judgment after death. Does Jesus express any view on this matter?

Yes, Jesus affirms that there will be a Final Judgment, to take place at the time of his Second Coming.

Two supporting passages are (1) Matthew 13:49-50 and (2) Matthew 25:31-42

Other supporting passages are: Matthew 10:15, Matthew 11:23-4, Matthew 12:36-7, Matthew 13:40-3, and Matthew 16:27-8

12. Many people today seem to believe that sexual desire is quite a natural emotion. and not something, in itself, to be condemned. Would Jesus have agreed?

No, Jesus would not have agreed, since he said that it was desirable never to marry if one could accept that alternative, and, immediately after referring to looking at a woman with a lustful eye, he went on to say that if your eye was your undoing, it was better to tear it out and throw it away. He also said that fornication was something that *defiled* a person.

Two supporting passages are (1) Matthew 5:28 and (2) Matthew 19:10-12

Other supporting passages are: Matthew 5:29-30, Matthew 15:19-20

13. Did Jesus believe in the existence of demons, or the devil?

Yes.

A supporting passage is (1) Matthew 4:1-11

Other supporting passages are: Matthew 4:24-5, Matthew 5:37, Matthew 8:28-34, Matthew 12:26-28, Matthew 12:43-5, Matthew 13:18-9, Matthew 13:39

A passage that does not explicitly refer to Jesus's own belief is: Matthew 8:16-17.

14. What did Jesus take God's commandment to be with respect to a person who curses his or her father or mother?

He said that God's commandment was that such a person should be put to death.

A supporting passage is (1) Matthew 15:3-5

II. Questions About the Content of Matthew, and the Teachings of the Catholic Church

1. Did Jesus found a church, and if so, what powers did he give to it?

Yes, Jesus did found a church, and he gave it the keys to the kingdom of heaven, saying that whatever was forbidden by the church, would be forbidden in heaven, and whatever was allowed by the church would be allowed in heaven

A supporting passage is (1) Matthew 16:17-9

(A much less explicit passage, but one that reaffirms some of the relevant powers is Matthew 18:18.)

2. The Catholic church teaches that Mary was always a virgin. Is this reasonable in the light of Matthew?

No, this is not reasonable, since Matthew says that Joseph did not have sexual intercourse with Mary *until* she had given birth to Jesus, while another passage refers to brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Three supporting passages are (1) Matthew 1:25, (2) Matthew 12:46-50 and (3) Matthew 13:53-8

3. The Catholic church teaches that divorce is never permissible. What was Jesus's teaching? Did he think that divorce and remarriage was ever permissible? What about in a case of continual physical abuse?

According to Matthew, Jesus said that it was wrong for a man to divorce his wife and then remarry, except in the case where the wife has committed adultery. (Mark attributes a different view to Jesus, according to which divorce is never permissible.)

Two supporting passages are (1) Matthew 5:31-2 and (2) Matthew 19:3-9

4. The Catholic church teaches that Jesus was God Incarnate. Which passage in Matthew most clearly indicates Jesus's own view of himself? Did Jesus hold that he was God Incarnate, according to that passage?

Jesus expressed agreement with Peter's view, which was that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, and so *not* God Incarnate.

The clearest passage is (1) Matthew 16:13-8

Another acceptable answer is Matthew 16:20

5. Matthew claims that Jesus arose from the dead. But there is another event that Matthew claims to have happened, within a very short time after Jesus's death, that is even more remarkable. What is the event in question?

There was an earthquake, and many graves were opened, and many people who had been dead got out of their graves and walked around the city, where they were seen by many people.

A supporting passage is (1) Matthew 27:52