

## Matthew 8:1-17

### *Jesus Heals and Forgives*

#### Introduction:

Matthew 8-9 is characterized by healings and the casting out of demons. Why was Jesus healing and casting out demons? He was proving Himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God. Here are 5 marks that characterize Jesus' healings and casting out of demons.

- (1) The healings were always instant. Jesus didn't have to conjure up the spirits or ask for healing over and over again.
- (2) Faith was not necessary (Matt. 11:20). The vast majority of people that were healed did not have faith or believe in Jesus. Jesus' willingness to heal was directly tied to God's will.
- (3) Demons always obey Jesus. The demons never back talked, disobeyed or defied Jesus' commands.
- (4) Those that were healed would all physically die later. All physical healing is temporary. Thus, physical healing is nothing compared to spiritual healing.
- (5) The primary message was always repent and believe. Our spiritual healing was the primary purpose of Jesus. We see that affirmed in the second half of Matthew 1:21: *"He will save His people from their sins (CSB)."*

#### Section 1: 8:1-4 – Leprosy healed as a sign to the priest that Jesus is God.

*When he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. <sup>2</sup>Right away a man with leprosy came up and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." <sup>3</sup>Reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, saying, "I am willing; be made clean." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus told him, "See that you don't tell anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (CSB)*

In the first century, leprosy was a disease that carried a death sentence. If anyone was found to have leprosy, they were declared unclean and sent to live in a leper colony until their death. They were doomed to live a life of isolation without family or friends with no hope of ever being healed. Jon Bloom puts it this way:

*Leprosy made you die many times before it killed you. It cut you off from those you loved most in the world. It forced you to live with other unclean people in a hopeless colony away from the town. Those with more advanced cases showed you what you had to look forward to. It forced you to call out "Unclean!" whenever people approached, and suffer the humiliation of watching them cover themselves and hurry by, cutting you a wide swath. And worst of all, it excluded you from the worshiping community that once had been the center of your life.*

We can read from 2 Kings 5:7 to see how hopelessly they viewed leprosy:

*<sup>7</sup>When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and asked, "Am I God, killing and giving life, that this man expects me to cure a man of his skin disease? Recognize that he is only picking a fight with me." (CSB)*

It was a massive deal that Jesus was even willing to talk with a leper. Not only did Jesus talk with the man, He touched him. This man had not had any human contact since the day he was declared unclean. Remember, leprosy was highly contagious and there was no cure. Therefore, no one would dare touch him. But Jesus isn't just anyone, He is God with us. Jesus reached out and touched him; then cleansed him. According to Levitical law, if you touch someone or something unclean you yourself became unclean. Yet when Jesus touches someone unclean...they become clean. This shows us that you are never so unclean that God can't make you clean through Christ.

After Jesus heals the man, Jesus tells him to go show himself to the priest and give the offering according to the law of Moses. We find a detailed description of this in Leviticus 14. The man would be examined and once he was found to be spotless, he would give an offering to the Lord. The priest would take a bowl, a piece of cedar, a scarlet thread, water and blood from the sacrifice. A general observation about Scripture is: whenever you see strange instructions in the Bible look for a picture of Christ. Below is an overview of how the offering described in Leviticus 14 points to Jesus:

- Two doves – One dies for the other. Jesus dies for us.
- Earthen vessel – Jesus became God with us and took on flesh.
- Cedar wood – a picture of the cross.
- Scarlet thread – speaks of how Jesus was always faithfully working throughout the OT. Lifeway has published a book in their Gospel Project curriculum that is available in PDF form on line: <https://www.gospelproject.com/wp-content/uploads/tgp2018/2018/04/The-Scarlet-Thread-Criswell.pdf>. This book details the scarlet thread connection of Jesus throughout the OT.
- The Leper would have to shave and start over – a picture of being reborn.
- The dove is set free – we are freed from the curse of sin through the blood of Christ.
- The leper was declared clean – we are cleansed from all unrighteousness through Christ.

David Guzik gives a more detailed description of how the offering in Leviticus 14 points to Jesus. You can read his description by following this link: [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Lev/Lev-14.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Lev/Lev-14.cfm).

The priest and everyone in Israel would only contribute a leper being healed to God. This would have forced the people to declare that Jesus is God. Obviously, the priest would not have liked this and would have struggled to explain how Jesus could cleanse such a man.

Remember, the book of Matthew was specifically written to a Jewish audience. This miracle is revealing to the Jews that (1) Jesus is God, (2) Jesus is able to cleanse the unclean and (3) God loves all people, even the those rejected by society. This man had been unable to enter the inner courts of the temple for worship because he was deemed physically unclean. His leprosy had created a barrier between himself and God. But Jesus is able to remove all barriers and bring us into the very presence of our Heavenly Father. The gospel truly is good news.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ Why was leprosy so devastating?
- ❖ Have you ever felt alone and isolated? How did you respond? How does the gospel bring hope during those times?
- ❖ Jesus was willing to touch the untouchable, why is this so significant?
- ❖ If Jesus was able to cleanse the leper, is there anyone he can't cleanse? How does this bring us hope?
- ❖ Why is it important to remember that Jesus removes all barriers between us and our heavenly Father?

### Section 2: 8:5-13 – A gentile is healed as a sign to the Jews that God loves all people.

*<sup>5</sup>When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, pleading with him, <sup>6</sup>“Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible agony.” <sup>7</sup>He said to him, “Am I to come and heal him?” <sup>8</sup>“Lord,” the centurion replied, “I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup>For I too am a man under authority, having soldiers under my command. I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” <sup>10</sup>Hearing this, Jesus was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with so great a faith. <sup>11</sup>I tell you that many will come from east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>12</sup>But the sons of the*

*kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus told the centurion, “Go. As you have believed, let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that very moment. (CSB)*

After Jesus heals the leper, we see a centurion come to Him. The centurions were gentile Roman soldiers that served Caesar. From the perspective of the Israelites, this man had at least two strikes against him: (1) being a gentile and (2) being a Roman soldier. As the centurion approaches Jesus, he says something strange. He calls Jesus Lord. This is strange because the Romans, especially the military, were to only call Caesar lord. But the centurion goes against his allegiance to the Roman Empire and calls Jesus Lord.

Jesus makes a remarkable or what the Israelites would have called a blasphemous statement: *Truly I tell you; I have not found anyone in Israel with so great a faith (8:10 CSB)*. Why was this so shocking? Because he was a Roman gentile. Why would Jesus, being an Israelite, ever say that a gentile could have more faith than anyone in Israel? After all the Israelites were God’s chosen people. Here in lies one of the problems, the nation of Israel had begun to believe that because they were the chosen people of God that they were the only people worthy of worshiping and knowing God. God did choose Israel, but not as the only people worthy to know Him. He made them lights to the world in which God would reveal His glory to all people. God desires all people (from every nation, tribe and tongue) to know Him.

Jesus is revealing to the to the Jewish people that faith and forgiveness are for all people. The centurion was considered ethnically unclean and therefore could not enter into the inner courts of the temple. Jesus once again is removing a barrier. We have seen that Jesus removes physical barriers and now we see Jesus can remove ethnical barriers. No matter the nationality you were born into Jesus can bring you salvation.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ Why was it significant that the centurion called Jesus Lord?
- ❖ The centurion showed that he had great faith, how do you show others you have great faith?
- ❖ The Israelites seem to have lost their purpose, why is it so easy to lose focus?
- ❖ How can we, as believers, keep our focus on proclaiming the glory of God and sharing the gospel to all people?

### Section 3: 8:14-17 – Jesus healed and cast out demons to fulfill prophesy.

*<sup>14</sup>Jesus went into Peter’s house and saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. <sup>15</sup>So he touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and began to serve him. <sup>16</sup>When evening came, they brought to him many who were demon-possessed. He drove out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick, <sup>17</sup>so that what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: **He himself took our weaknesses and carried our diseases.***

Jesus arrives at Peter’s house and finds his mother-in-law in bed with a fever. Again, we see Jesus touched the sick. Does Jesus become sick? Of course not. Again, Jesus cleanses the unclean. Given the verses that follow, it appears that word of Jesus’ ability to heal spread throughout the area. By evening everyone was bringing their sick and demon possessed to Him.

Why was Jesus healing and casting out demons? To fulfill prophecy. Jesus was giving the people a taste of the Kingdom of God. We are looking to the day when we will dwell with our heavenly Father for all eternity in a sinless kingdom. No more worries, diseases, sicknesses, injuries or heartache. The reason we say a “taste of the Kingdom of

God” is because all the people that were healed have one thing in common, they will all later die. Their physical healing on earth was limited, but through Christ our spiritual healing is permanent.

Jesus was focused on getting the gospel to all people. The reason behind the healings was to proclaim the message of repent and believe. We will see this in greater detail in Matthew 11:20:

*<sup>20</sup>Then He proceeded to denounce the towns where most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent:*

This shows us that repentance is central to the gospel message. Jesus’ primary purpose in coming to earth was to redeem our souls. As Matthew 1:21 says, *“He will save His people from their sins.”* The physical healings pointed to Jesus being the Messiah and the Son of God. But the desired result was always repentance.

Through the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, we see another barrier removed. Women were unable to enter into the inner courts of the temple because they were biologically unclean. Only Israelite men that were deemed clean could enter the inner courts and beyond that only the priest could enter the holy place. And as if that wasn’t limited enough, only the high priest could enter the holy of holies once a year. Because of sin, access to God was limited. Peter’s mother-in-law was limited, but Jesus once again removes a barrier. Through Jesus, Peter’s mother-in-law was able to rise and serve. To recap, Jesus has removed physical and ethnic barriers and now He is removing biological barriers. No matter where you come from or the life you were born into, Jesus cleanses you and makes you worthy to serve.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ Jesus once again touches the unclean. How active are you in reaching out and serving those that are considered “unclean” or “outcast” in our society?
- ❖ After Peter’s mother-in-law was healed, she began to serve. Once you were saved (cleansed from sin) how eager were you to serve? Are you still eager to serve today?
- ❖ We see that people began to bring those they loved to Jesus for healing. How faithful are you in bringing the good news of Jesus to the people you love?
- ❖ Jesus was faithful to remove barriers, are you rejoicing in the removal of barriers in your life by committing your whole life to Christ and His glory? Basically, are you living for self or God?

### Conclusion

Jesus healed three different people that were unable to enter into the inner courts of the temple for worship. Through Jesus, all barriers to our heavenly Father has been removed. How should this impact how we see ourselves? We should see ourselves as forgiven servants of God. We are now free to worship God in truth and in Spirit. We are now free to serve God in whatever circumstance we find ourselves. We are now free from the wages of sin. Praise God that the gospel is a free gift that brings us everlasting salvation.