

**MT. 8-9 CHRIST'S HEALINGS**



After Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, we will now see how powerful was his healing ministry. Through His mighty actions, Jesus not only showed He possessed the divine wisdom to give the Sermon on the Mount, but also the divine power to heal as many as he wished, which as we will see, included bringing the dead back to life.

We read, "When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, 'See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them'" (Mt. 8:1-4).

Leprosy today is known as Hansen's disease, a more technical name for this dreaded disease (it can also refer to other severe skin disorders). Worldwide there are around two million people stricken with leprosy; in India alone there are more than a thousand leper colonies. Antibiotics help control the disease but not eliminate it.

In Leviticus 13, God gave the Israelites an effective way to control and suppress the disease—through quarantine (isolation) of the patient. Grant Jeffrey writes, "Until this century, all previous societies, except for the Israelites who followed God's medical laws regarding quarantine, kept infected patients in their homes—even after death, exposing family members and others to deadly disease. During the devastating Black Death [or bubonic plague] of the fourteenth century, patients who were sick or dead were kept in the same rooms as the rest of the family. People often wondered why the disease [which killed a third of Europeans and seemed unstoppable] was affecting so many people at one time. They attributed these epidemics to 'bad air' or 'evil spirits.' However, careful attention to the medical commands of God as revealed in Leviticus would have saved untold millions of lives. Arturo Castiglione wrote about the overwhelming importance of this biblical medical law, 'The laws against leprosy in Leviticus 13 may be regarded as the first model of a sanitary

legislation" (Grant Jeffrey, *The Signature of God*, 1996, p. 150).

Next, a centurion (a Roman officer in charge of 100 men) asked Jesus to heal a beloved servant. The account in Luke gives more details: "Now when he concluded all his sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, 'for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.' Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, 'Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.' When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, 'I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!' And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick" (Luke 7:1-10).

It is interesting that the ruins of a large synagogue were found in the town of Capernaum in 1866, and it dates back to the fourth century. But underneath the synagogue are the foundations of an older synagogue that dates back to the age of Christ. It is very probable that this was the synagogue that this centurion had built. No other synagogues have been found and normally, a new synagogue was built on the foundation of the previous one.

Christ next goes to Peter's house and heals Peter's mother-in-law, showing Peter was married and not celibate. It is quite possible that the ruins of Peter's house were found in Capernaum. Early on, a house was enlarged and became a place of pilgrimage, and no other has that characteristic. Of course, for us it's just an interesting sidelight,

since, according to the Second Commandment, we are not to worship relics, people or places.

Afterwards, Christ healed many more. "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses' (Matthew 8:16-18). Here we see Christ's mission was not only to die for our sins but to also provide a way for healing our sicknesses. This is why we go to God and ask the ministry for an anointing, as James 5:14-15 says.

Then the multitude followed Him to see what He would do next. A scribe, a studious person of the Bible, told Him he wanted to become a disciple, but Christ warned him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Apparently, invitations for Jesus and His disciples were quite scarce.

Then another of His disciples said to Him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead" (Mt. 8:18-21). Luke 9 adds, "But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Christ was saying that following Him would not be easy. It would not be a cushy life. There would be many hardships and trials, and once committed, a person should never turn back. The expression "Let the dead bury the dead" is referring to leaving the unconverted to bury the unconverted. As Clarke's Commentary points out, "Bury my father: probably his father was old, and apparently near death; but it was a maxim among the Jews, that, if a man had any duty to perform to the dead, he was, for that time, free from the observance of any other precept or duty."

After all this work, and with the multitude pressing on Him and requesting more miracles, Christ was exhausted and needed to recharge. "And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side...Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came

to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing! But He said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm. So the men marveled, saying, 'Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Mt. 8:23-27).

These sudden storms are still frequent at Lake Galilee. This is due to the geography of the place. It is one of the lowest places on the face of the earth, some 600 ft. below sea level. Winds are drawn in as if in a funnel and turn the placid waters into howling storms. Barclay recounts a traveler's experience, "A company of visitors were standing on the shore at Tiberias, and, noting the glassy surface of the water and the smallness of the lake, they expressed doubts as to the possibility of such storms as those described in the Gospels. Almost immediately the wind sprang up. In twenty minutes the sea was white with foam-crested waves. Great billows broke over the towers at the corners of the city walls, and the visitors were compelled to seek shelter from the blinding spray, though now 200 yards from the lakeside. In less than half an hour, the placid sunshine had become a raging storm" (Daily Study Bible). This storm is called in the Bible a *megas seismos*, a violent shaking, either of the air or of the ground. It shows us how the term *seismos* is not confined in prophecy to just earthquakes but can include tornados and hurricanes.

Once Christ halted the storm, they arrived at the other side of Lake Galilee, where the gentile Gadarenes has settled in one of the cities of the Decapolis (ten cities) established by the Greeks.

The Bible says, "When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way, And suddenly they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with You, Jesus, You son of God? Have you come to torment us before the time?' Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, 'If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.' And He said to them, 'Go.' So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of

swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city” (Mt. 8:28-9:1).

Today, many people with demon-possession problems end up in psychiatric wards where they are given many sedatives to control them. Of course, there are many types of psychic disorders that have nothing to do with demons, but rather with biological, genetic or chemical imbalances. So, when possible it's best to have both a ministerial and a medical diagnosis to determine the real cause of the malady.

The demons in these two men recognized Jesus and they knew they will be judged by Him in God's kingdom and were asking if He was tormenting them before their judgment day.

They knew they were subject to Jesus' commands and were going to be expelled from these men. Since they don't like to remain as wandering spirits (see Mt. 12:43) because then they find no rest and have to contemplate their ultimate fate, they asked if they could enter the herd of swine. Jesus granted their petition, but apparently, when the swine felt the demon's presence in them, they either panicked or were herded into destruction by these very demons. All the swine ended up going off the cliff and drowning in Lake Galilee. The gentile people, knowing what had transpired, were apparently more worried about the loss of property than the great miracle and urged Jesus to leave. As one commentator puts it, “The loss of the herd became a way of exposing the real values of the people in the vicinity. They preferred pigs to persons, swine to the Savior.”

Back in Capernaum, He healed more people. In Luke's account, they lowered the paralytic from the roof. We read, “When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins have been forgiven you.’ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemes!’ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For

which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins’—then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed and go to your house.’ And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men” (Mt. 9:2-8).

Next, Jesus resurrects the daughter of a ruler (Mark mentions he was the ruler of a synagogue named Jairus). The father pleaded with Christ to bring her back to life and he went to see her. We read, “When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing.”

This type of mourning was typical of those days. “According to one ancient Jewish text, ‘Even the poorest in Israel should hire not less than two flutes and one wailing woman’ (*Ket.* 4:4)....And because bodies decomposed rapidly in Palestine, mourners had to be assembled immediately upon someone's death, and these mourners had gathered even before word had reached Jairus that his daughter had died.”

So, “He said to them, ‘Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they ridiculed him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all the land” (Mt. 9:24-26). Jesus Christ would eventually resurrect three persons from the dead—and one of those would be dead and buried for three days—Lazarus!

Jesus then heals two blind men by asking them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said to Him, Yes, Lord. Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.’ And their eyes were opened” (Mt. 9:28-29). He then healed a man mute and demon-possessed.

We see why He healed so many. It says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with *compassion* for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Mt. 9:36). The term “compassion” here is *splagchnizomai* or the movement of your insides, (as “bowels of mercy”) something you deeply feel. This was His love for those common people that few of the rich or powerful ever worried about.