

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 8 -- John Karmelich

1. If you only remember one thing from Chapter 8 of the Gospel of Matthew, simply ask yourself, "With each miracle, why did Jesus choose to heal this person"?
 - a) Chapters 8 and 9 focus on Jesus, the miracle worker.
 - b) We have now finished the 3-chapter long Sermon on the Mount, and now Matthew spends the next two chapters describing ten miracles performed by Jesus, along with a few other instructional words of wisdom.
 - c) When it comes to miracles, I have never had a problem believing in miracles.
 - i) If you believe Jesus is God, then you should believe Jesus is capable of doing anything. If you believe Jesus is the creator of the universe (See John 1:2, or Colossians 1:16), then you should not have a problem with the miraculous events as described in these two chapters.
 - ii) If you don't believe the miracles were true stories, then you don't believe Jesus is God, and you have much bigger problems than the miracle stories. ☺
 - iii) Remember the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew: It is to present Jesus as the "Messiah", which simply means king. All through the Old Testament there are hints and descriptions of a promised king who will rule the world from Jerusalem.
 - a) Christians believe in that literal fulfillment. That is the role of Jesus Second Coming. The main purpose of his first coming was as payment of our sins.
 - b) The necessity of such things as miracles is to validate Jesus is God. Only God himself can provide the perfect sacrifice for our sins.
 - d) Let's get back to the original premise. Why did Jesus choose to heal the people he did?
 - i) Remember that Jesus had multitudes following him at this point.
 - a) They wanted to see the miraculous.
 - ii) When you start to study the people choose to heal, you begin to see a pattern of specific "types" of people. We'll discuss that as we go.
 - iii) You get the impression that Jesus healed lots of people. Matthew specifically choose to write about these specific miracles (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit) to show Jesus non-exclusiveness of any particular group.
2. If I had to pick a personal application for today, it is as follows: No one person, or no particular pain is beyond healing.
 - a) God the Father loves us. A perfect God loves us perfectly.
 - b) The mistake we make is we are often shocked when miracles do occur.
 - c) We tend to assume the logical over the miraculous.
 - d) So why doesn't God perform more miracles today, like we read in these stories?
 - i) A couple of things to consider. First of all we, as Americans live in a world with a credit card we can use for emergencies, hospital care nearby, savings accounts and incredible technology that no one could have imagined even a century ago.
 - ii) How can God get all the glory when we can turn elsewhere to solve our problems? This is not a put-down of any of these other things. God gives us the gifts of technology, hospital care, and financial resources so through those methods he can heal us. The point is why *should* God perform a special miracle when He has already provided other alternatives.
 - a) Again, don't put "God in a box". I have seen incredible modern stories that defy the imagination.
 - b) I have also found that some of the best miracle-stories I have heard of (from reliable sources) come from the missionary fields where other resources, we take for grant it, are not available.

- c) I have also seen God do some of his “best work” when we are fully dependant upon God and have exhausted all are other resources. God doesn’t like competition. ☺ He will often let you try every other possibility before performing the miraculous just to demonstrate how we are fully dependant upon Him for our lives.
 - e) When it comes to miracles God not only cares about our eternal salvation, but also our lives here on earth.
 - i) God wants us to seek him to heal us of our physical and mental infirmities.
 - ii) When I pray, I like to assume that God wants to heal and perform miracles.
 - iii) The answer depends on whether or not it is God’s will to do so. He’s in charge, and I’m not. To use a modern cliché, “It never hurts to ask”. ☺
 - iv) God often says “no” or “wait” to our prayer requests because he has some greater purpose than what we can see at the present moment.
 - v) When the “no” or “wait” answer comes, we have to trust that God has some greater purpose in giving that answer. A perfect God, who knows all things, including the future, may have some greater purpose, or some greater plan for us. God therefore, sometimes gives us a “no” or “wait” answer to a prayer request.
- 3. Before we start into the actual miracles, I want to show you an interesting quote Jesus gave:
 - a) “I (Jesus) tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He (us!) will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12, NIV)
 - b) Stop and consider that for a second:
 - i) Jesus made this statement (at John 14:12) within the last week prior to the cross.
 - ii) The disciples have seen Jesus do lots of miracles, all beyond human explanation.
 - iii) Now Jesus is saying in effect, “Anyone who believes in me will do greater things!”
 - a) Is Jesus saying that we have the power to do greater miracles than what Jesus did in those three years?
 - b) Is Jesus saying that He has given us the power to heal deaf, dumb, blind, cure leprosy, cancer or fill-in-the-blank?
 - c) The answer is Yes he does, and yes he can.
 - d) God works through us, including miracles to bring Him glory.
 - iv) God is in charge and not us. God has given us this power in order to glorify God. We can’t predict when and where it will happen, we can only pray assuming God has that power and can exercise that power through us whenever God desires.
- 4. Let me give you a few last thoughts, and then we’ll start Chapter 8:
 - a) Jesus said, “However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”
 - i) To paraphrase what Jesus is saying, “Keep miracles in perspective. Yes you should be happy that God has given you as a believer all of this power, but it is not nearly as a great a miracle as the fact you are going to spend eternity in heaven.”
 - a) All the people who get cured of diseases are going to die again.
 - b) All the blind that miraculously can see again will eventually die.
 - c) All the dead who have been raised by Jesus (and by miracles) die again.
 - ii) The point is miracles are wonderful and they give an opportunity for us to praise God and for God to demonstrate his love for us. We simply need to remember that our eternal salvation should bring us greater joy than any miracle.
 - b) Here’s another thing to remember about miracles:
 - i) “He (Jesus) said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’” (Luke 16:31, NIV)
 - ii) Jesus point is that miracles are not enough for Christian conversion.

- iii) If people don't want to change their ways, they will look at miracles and try to figure out a "logical explanation". They have to do it that way, because the alternative is to accept God's power and change their lifestyle, which many don't want to do.
- iv) The other point is people will often see a miracle, accept it is from God, and then "shrug their shoulders" and go on their way. People accept the idea of God, but don't do anything about it. People are willing to accept that God can do miracles, but it is not enough to change their lifestyles.
- v) The application is don't pray, "God, if you just show this person a miracle, I know they will change their life". It doesn't work that way. Instead pray to God that their heart will be opened to God's truth and they be willing to change their ways.

5. Chapter 8, Verse 1: When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ² A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

- a) The first miracle recorded by Matthew takes place right after the Sermon on the Mount.
- b) "When he came down from the mountainside" is a reference to Jesus coming down off the mountain where he gave the 3-chapter long speech.
- c) It is sort of amazing to think about why this is the first miracle.
 - i) Here was this large crowd, leaving the speech, now following Jesus to see what he would do next.
 - ii) For those who don't know, leprosy is considered a contagious disease.
 - iii) The book of Leviticus spends 2 chapters discussing what to do about leprosy.
 - a) In summary, it is to be avoided at all costs.
 - b) If you have leprosy, you are to yell out "unclean" as you walk so others can avoid you.
 - c) The interesting thing is nowhere in the bible is any mention of how to cure leprosy. Leviticus focuses on how to recognize it and how to isolate it so it doesn't spread.
 - d) Leprosy today is known as Hansen's disease, named after Dr. Hansen who spent his lifetime doing research on this disease.
 - (1) Scholars argue over whether Hansen's disease and ancient leprosy are one in the same, but the majority opinion says it is the same.
 - iv) So here is this large crowd leaving the speech. Now visualize a leper approaching.
 - a) You can hear the yells of "watch out, run away, it's a leper".
 - b) I can visualize this guy "splitting the crowds" as no one will touch him.
 - (1) Except Jesus!
 - (2) It is against Jewish law to touch a leper. Note that Jesus touched him in order to cure him.
- d) It is no coincidence that the first recorded miracle is a disease of which the bible never speaks of how to cure.
 - i) There are only a few recorded instances of cured leprosy in the bible.
 - a) When Moses' sister Miriam rebelled against Moses, she temporarily got leprosy and then after Moses prayed for her, it went away. (Numbers 12:10-15)
 - b) The only other instance was when a Syrian general who had leprosy was cured based on the instructions of the Hebrew prophet Elisha. (2nd Kings 5:10-14)
 - ii) Now remember the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew: Jesus is the Messiah.
 - a) Nowhere in the Old Testament is a cure given for leprosy.

- b) Leprosy is considered a word-picture or a “type”, for sin.
 - (1) Because it spreads on the “flesh” and there is no cure.
 - (2) Further we are to avoid it at all cost.
 - c) The word-picture being displayed is that Jesus “touched what we cannot touch”. He took the sin upon himself so that the leper is now cured of his disease.
 - d) The word-picture also being displayed is that the “Law” as taught in Leviticus only teaches us how to recognize leprosy and how to stop it from spreading. It never teaches how to make it go away.
 - (1) One can see the comparison to leprosy and sin here.
 - (2) Jesus is needed to actually remove leprosy.
 - iii) This is also the first time in the Gospels where anyone calls Jesus “Lord”.
 - a) Again, we have a word-picture of the gospel message of salvation.
 - b) Here is a person “covered in sin” turning to Jesus as Lord for his cure.
 - iv) Remember my opening premise. The key to reading this section of the Gospel of Matthew is to ask yourself “why these people?” Why were these specific miracles chosen to show God’s power?
 - a) The first miracle, a type of incurable sin under the “law” can only be cured by the one who is willing to call Jesus “Lord” of their lives.
- 6. Let’s finish the story; Verse 3: Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”
 - a) Remember that the man who had leprosy asked Jesus if he was willing to cure him.
 - i) We approach Jesus “hat in hand”. We can’t approach Jesus saying, “I will only follow you under the following conditions”. This man approached Jesus saying in effect, “Jesus, its up to you. I have no other options but to continue living my life this way. I put my life, my disease, my ills in your hands”.
 - ii) Jesus said, “I am willing”. He makes that same promise to anyone who is willing to approach Jesus as if there is no other alternative nor any preconditions.
 - iii) At that point the man was immediately cured.
 - b) In Verse 4, Jesus tells the ex-leper “not tell anyone but go show yourself to the priest”.
 - i) You will see a pattern in the gospels where Jesus discourages people to tell others about their miracle cure. Jesus can’t teach if he is being thronged by people trying to touch him. You will see a pattern of Jesus keeping a short distance from the crowd (e.g., teach from standing in a boat off the beach) in order to preach.
 - ii) So given that Jesus didn’t want crowds to throng him for the wrong reason, why did Jesus tell this guy to “show yourself to the priest”?
 - a) Notice the last part of Verse 4: “As a testimony to them”.
 - b) The “them” is the religious leaders. Jesus not only cares about the salvation of the leper, the people around him, but also the religious leaders who would later condemn him.
 - c) Leviticus 14-15 teaches of how to spot and deal with leprosy. Part of that ritual is if you have it, or in this case “had it”, to show yourself to the priest. Notice Jesus didn’t say to the leper, “Ignore the Old Testament rules and just follow me.” Jesus interprets them, but never denies following them. In this case, because the person cured was a Jew, instructed them to follow the prescribed rituals. Not that it would help keep away the leprosy, but that the miracle cure would be a witness for others.

- iii) Also notice in Verse 4 that Jesus says Moses wrote Leviticus.
 - a) There are those who deny Moses wrote the first five books of the bible.
 - b) Jesus quotes from all five books in the gospels and attributes all 5 to Moses.
 - c) If you believe Jesus is God, then you have to believe Moses is the author of the first five books of the bible.
- 7. Verse 5: When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering."
 - a) We now come to the second miracle.
 - b) Notice that there is a time gap here. The text does not say it necessarily happened right after the first miracle.
 - c) Again, the question to ask is, "Why did Jesus pick *this person* to cure?"
 - i) Instead of a Jew, we now have a Roman commander, a "Centurion".
 - a) The Romans were hated as the oppressors over the Jews.
 - b) Here was a local commander.
 - d) The fact that Jesus even helped this man had to be a shock to the locals.
- 8. Verse 7: Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him."
 - a) I believe Matthew specifically picked this miracle second as to show Jesus is not only Lord of the Jews, but Lord of the Gentiles as well.
 - i) The God of the Universe loves all and wants to heal all.
 - ii) Jesus picks an "offensive" example as Jesus chooses to heal a Roman soldier.
 - b) If Jesus can help those who the Jews consider offensive, imagine what he can do to help those *we* consider offensive!
 - c) It is against Jewish custom to go the home of a Gentile (See Acts 10:28). One can speculate all day what would the reaction be if Jesus actually went to his home. The fact that the Roman Centurion said in effect "it's not necessary" (in Verse 8) may have been out of respect for that custom. (Grant it, this is speculation, but it is interesting to think about.)
 - d) This is interesting to read this from the perspective of the Roman Centurion.
 - i) Roman law states that if a servant (i.e., slave) of a soldier is sick, the soldier had the right to kill him. Yet this soldier turns to a stranger, a Jew no less, who the soldier recognized had the power of healing, to save his servant's life.
 - a) This Roman Centurion is a man of compassion.
- 9. Verse 8: The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."
 - a) Notice that the centurion called Jesus "Lord" in Verse 8.
 - i) We don't know what he meant by that, but he obviously thought of Jesus as superior to him. That is saying something for a Roman commander.
 - ii) As a soldier, he did understand chain of command. Calling Jesus "Lord" at the least meant that Jesus was superior to him.
 - b) Verses 8-9 are among the most powerful in the bible on the topic of obedience.
 - i) Imagine saying to the God of the Universe in effect, "You don't have to come to my house, just say "it's done" and I know it will be so".
 - ii) We as Christians, tend to forget the *power* of God. We tend to pray harder when the sickness is more "serious" in our minds. For example, we pray harder for cancer than we do for a head cold, as if we need more effort on our part in order for God to react.
 - iii) One of the advantages of military training is the concept of "chain of command".
 - a) Anyone who's in the military understands that once a superior officer gives an order, you don't question it, you act upon it. You can speculate later if it was a good order or not, but in the meantime, you just do it.

- b) If God is our “superior commander” then why do we (yes we!) rebel so often and disobey what he *commands* us to do?
- 10. Verse 10: When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”¹¹ I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.¹² But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
 - a) In order to comprehend this, you have to understand the mindset of Jews at that time.
 - b) The common view then was that salvation was for the Jews only.
 - i) God wanted Israel to be a witness to the world. Israel was located in the middle of the trade route between three continents. It was located where it is for that reason.
 - ii) The mistake over the centuries was that arrogance crept in. The common view during that time era was that religious Jews thought they were superior to others. A reason may have been because of centuries of oppression under different empires. In order to keep their pride, the common view was that one can get to heaven only by converting to Judaism and that Gentiles had no chance of salvation.
 - a) The application to you and I is that often Christians get “smug” in their salvation views. We can think “I’m saved, too bad for you, unless you want to convert, of course”. Salvation is only by Jesus; I’m not denying that fact. I’m simply cautioning all of us against smugness in our attitude.
 - c) So here was Jesus first of all, agreeing to go the house of Gentile, a hated-Roman no less.
 - i) Further, Jesus *compliments* his faith, saying it is greater than any faith in God Jesus has seen in any Israelite.
 - ii) Now if that statement isn’t offensive enough, *now* Jesus is saying that many Gentiles will be in “A Jewish Heaven”, (by saying they will eat with “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”) and further, that many Jews will be condemned to hell.
 - a) You have to understand how radical that last statement is:
 - b) First of all, “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” are the patriarch’s who started the Jewish race. From Jacob’s 12 sons came the entire Jewish nation.
 - c) Jesus is announcing that 1) there is a heaven, 2) these three guys are (or will be) resurrected and will be there and 3) Gentiles will be part of that feast!
 - d) Further, Jesus announces there is a hell, and many Jews will be there.
 - (1) A common view in Judaism at that time is that all Jews are “automatically” admitted into heaven because they are Jewish.
 - (2) Jesus commonly refers to hell as a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth”. Weeping comes from frustration of not being able to change a situation. The “gnashing” is a description of physical pain. Personally, I think the eternal pain isn’t some sort of physical torture as much as it is eternal separation from God. One spends eternity in pure darkness. That causes the weeping and gnashing.
 - iii) Some of these same views are also prevalent today.
 - a) People assume that because they “go to church twice a year” and basically believe in Jesus (but don’t do anything about it) they are “automatically saved for eternity.
 - b) We look at some as “beyond help” and turn our collective backs on them.
 - d) Finally, we should talk about Jesus compliment of this Roman’s faith.
 - i) Here is a guy who doesn’t understand all the details of Judaism.
 - a) The Roman Centurion probably never read or studied the Hebrew bible.

- b) All this Roman knows is that this “Jesus guy” is more powerful than me. I’m hurting (because my beloved servant is hurting) and this guy, by just saying so, can fix the situation. So he says in effect, “Lord, just give the command, and I take it on faith the situation is over with”.
 - (1) How many of us, after praying, can walk away and say, “OK, I’ve now prayed about it, it is now up to God, and I don’t have to worry about it anymore!”
 - (2) This example of simple trust in God is more important than detailed bible knowledge. Walking by faith is trusting that God moment by moment *is* working things out in our life.
- 11. Verse 13: Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour.
 - a) Jesus rewards the man’s faith and heals the servant.
 - b) The Roman Centurion left Jesus. He probably ran home to see what would happen.
 - c) My introduction to this chapter asks you to think about the people receiving the miracles. Why did Jesus choose that particular person to perform a miracle? (Another way is to ask why did Matthew mention this particular miracle?)
 - d) The important thing as far as the healing of the Roman soldier’s servant is to remember is to show that Gentiles were not beyond the reach of Jesus, and that faith is simply about trusting God’s will, will be done.
- 12. Verse 14: When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.
 - a) Here we have the third miracle located in this two-chapter section of Matthew.
 - b) To understand this historically, one has to remember that women were considered a lower class of citizen at that time.
 - i) The first miracle was that Jesus choose to heal a Jewish outcast (a leper).
 - ii) The second miracle was that Jesus healed a Gentile (A Roman Centurion)
 - iii) Now the third miracle is that Jesus healed a woman.
 - c) One has to remember that like leprosy, a fever is a contagious disease.
 - i) Notice Jesus choose to touch her in order to heal her.
 - d) These two verses are also an inspiration for how we are to react to Jesus.
 - i) Peter’s mother-in-law, after being healed, immediately got up and served Jesus.
 - ii) First it shows that when Jesus heals, it is 100% cured. She didn’t have to wait for her strength to return in order to serve Jesus. That statement about serving Jesus validates this as a miracle as opposed to just the fever going away.
 - iii) Second, this is a model of how we are to react to Jesus. Out of gratitude for her healing, she began to serve Jesus. That is a great model of our salvation.
 - e) We learn in this verse that Peter was married. There is no other reference about Peter’s wife other than an acknowledgement by Paul that the disciples had wives (1st Corinthians 9:5).
 - i) Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that Peter was the first pope. History teaches that the early church was not centralized like it was centuries later.
 - a) You can kid your Catholic friends that the first pope was a married Jew. ☺
- 13. Verse 16: When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."
 - a) The next set of miracles lumps a group of people who were “demon possessed” and it also mentions “all the sick”. I suppose that it refers to all the sick among the crowds in that town.

- b) Matthews point in Verses 16 and 17 is simply to show that Jesus healing touch is part of prophecy being fulfilled.
 - i) Matthew quotes Isaiah 53:4 in Verse 17 of Chapter 8.
 - ii) Isaiah was written roughly 600 years before Christ, yet it focuses on the Messiah paying the price for our sins.
 - iii) Isaiah Chapter 53, is in the Old Testament, but it sounds like it belongs in the New Testament. It is a detailed description of the necessity of Jesus dying on the cross. It is one of the clearest descriptions of Jesus' purpose of his 1st coming.
 - iv) Yet here, Matthew also ties it to the miracles that Jesus performed.
 - v) The implication of Isaiah Chapter 53 and this verse is not only that Jesus cured these diseases, but also took them upon himself.
 - a) It doesn't mean that Jesus got fevers or became demon possessed in their place. The purpose of the miracles is to demonstrate God's power and to show support that Jesus is God.
 - b) For Jesus to "take up our infirmities and carried our diseases" simply means he carried them away, never to return.
 - vi) Matthew seems to be implying that Isaiah 53:4 has a double-fulfillment.
 - a) First it refers to Jesus performing miracles to validate who he is.
 - b) Second it also refers to Jesus taking our sins upon himself as payment.
 - c) Remember that the bible teaches Jesus *became* sin for us.
 - (1) "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2nd Cor. 5:21, NIV)

14. Verse 18: When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹ Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰ Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."
- a) I always found this section interesting. Here is a guy willing to follow Jesus.
 - i) I suspect as Jesus was healing people, the crowds were cheering or standing there in astonishment.
 - ii) Here was a guy who saw all of this and wanted to follow Jesus.
 - iii) Notice Jesus doesn't say, "Great, come join me". Instead he gives this "foxes have holes". statement.
 - iv) The point here is that people can want to become Christians, or at least express interest in Christianity for the wrong reasons.
 - b) Some people think, "being involved in Christianity is exciting. I get to see lots of miracles. It's the "in-thing" of the moment. Jesus responds to this person by saying, "'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."
 - i) What Jesus meant by that is simply count the cost before declaring your willingness to become a follower of Jesus.
 - ii) It means that Jesus now rules over *every* aspect of your life.
 - iii) It means that Jesus desires we live our lifestyle on biblical principals.
 - iv) One should ponder the cost of being a disciple before making that commitment.
 - v) Don't get me wrong. Eternal salvation waits for those who choose to follow Jesus. God want everyone to choose that route. One simply has to understand that there will be suffering in this lifetime for that choice.
 - a) "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," (2nd Timothy 3:12, NIV).
 - vi) The expression of "foxes have holes...Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" relays the concept that Jesus gave his all for our sins. God expects us to give everything to follow Jesus.

- c) Commentators believe that the “Foxes have holes” sentence was a common expression of that day.
 - i) The main difference is that Jesus adds the clause the “Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head”. The phrase “Son of Man” is a title, not a literal reference.
 - ii) There are places in the Old Testament where people are called “The Son of Man”. Don’t get that confused with the specific title of Son of Man being used to refer to the Messiah himself.
 - a) The title is used in Daniel: “I (Daniel) was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven!” (Daniel 7:13a, NKJV).
15. Verse 21: Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ²² But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."
- a) The sentence “first let me go and bury my father” was an expression of that day.
 - i) This man’s father was not even sick. This expression simply means that I will choose to follow you after my father passes away.
 - ii) Understanding that, Jesus response makes more sense.
 - b) Jesus is not speaking against taking care of your father.
 - i) Paul expressly says in 1st Timothy 5:8 that Christians should be responsible to provide for their own family. This refers to parents as well.
 - ii) Jesus is using a cliché to respond to another cliché.
 - iii) It simply means to be a disciple is to follow Jesus now and not make excuses.
 - c) This reminds me of another misunderstood verse that Jesus taught:
 - i) “If anyone comes to me (Jesus) and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26 NIV)
 - ii) Does this mean Jesus wants you to go around hating your parents and siblings?
 - a) Of course not. One has to read that part of the verse in perspective of our relationship to Jesus.
 - b) Being a disciple of Jesus means everything you have belongs to Jesus.
 - (1) This includes our lives, and our love for our family.
 - c) Let me give you a practical example. Suppose you, (assuming you’re an adult) felt called to be a missionary and want to go off to another country. Let’s say your siblings and parents, who are not Christians, refuse. Let’s further assume your parents don’t need your financial support at the moment. Are you going to refuse to be a missionary because your parents forbid it?
 - d) Here’s another example. What about if your family is a different religion and they refuse to let you convert to Christianity? This is a case where you must love Jesus *more* than loving your parents and siblings.
 - e) I should also add I don’t believe this verse applies to children. I never try to evangelize say, to a 10-year old child of say, a Mormon, the same way I wouldn’t want a Mormon to try to change my 10-year old child. By the time my child gets to high school, I expect them to be grounded in their beliefs and that is ok to talk to people of different religions and beliefs.
16. Verse 23: Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴ Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" ²⁶ He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

- a) Here we get a demonstration of the power of God.
- b) The disciples, who for the most part were professional fisherman. They understood storms. Yet here was a storm so bad, it frightened them. Jesus, who was asleep during this storm, “rebuked” the waves, and everything was calm.
- c) Let’s put this paragraph in perspective of what was just written in the prior verses.
 - i) Jesus just made the “foxes have holes” comment. This was a cliché that refers to the fact that the cost of being a disciple means giving up everything you have.
 - ii) Jesus then made the “let the dead bury their own dead” idiom. It refers to the fact that being a follower of Jesus is a priority over one’s own family.
 - iii) The disciples, hearing all of this, must have been taken aback. Think of the total cost that one has to pay to follow Jesus. Now here they were, thinking they are about to drown and what does a sleepy Jesus do? He “snaps his fingers” and the waves calm down!
 - iv) I believe this was done to show the disciples why it is necessary to give up everything and follow Jesus. Jesus is God. He has created all things and controls all things. We obey Jesus because He is God. Any material benefits we get in this life are secondary. We obey because He is in charge.
- d) Let me give you something else to think about. Why was Jesus asleep?
 - i) In Mark’s Gospel, the same story is told in Chapter 4, Verses 35-41.
 - ii) Mark gives us a detail not mentioned here in Matthew’s account.
 - iii) “That day when evening came, he (Jesus) said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” (Mark 4:35 NIV)
 - iv) Jesus gave the command to go to the other side.
 - v) Since that Jesus gave that command, Jesus could fall asleep on the trip over knowing he was going to get there.
 - vi) Further, he was teaching the disciples to trust him through the storms of life.
 - vii) That is the lesson for you and I. God allows us to go through horrible storms. Our life as Christians is all about trusting Jesus through the storms.
 - a) Jesus never promised us that if we follow him, we get to avoid pain.
 - b) In fact, the bible teaches just the opposite. God, who has the power to control the storms of our lives, is fully in control. Our job is to pray to God, be dependant upon Him, and know that He has a plan for our lives and we are simply to trust in Him through that storm.
- e) Remember that the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Messiah.
 - i) Many a prophet has come and gone in Israel.
 - ii) Some have done miracles similar to *some* of the miracles Jesus has done so far.
 - iii) Nobody, not even Moses said to the waves of the storm to stop.
 - a) Grant it, Moses parted the Red Sea, but when you read the account, Moses didn’t pray for the sea to part, he was following God’s command to step into the Sea, and then it parted for the Israelites. The same principal applied when the Jordan River stopped flowing when Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land some 40 years later.
 - b) In all these cases, it is about trusting God that He is in control, and our job is to believe that and walk in obedience to what He calls us to do.

17. Verse 28: When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. ²⁹ "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"
- a) We are now on the east side of the Lake of Galilee. To summarize this whole section, Jesus and the disciples get off the boat, and here comes two demon possessed men out to meet them.

- b) This same story is told in Mark Chapter 5 and Luke Chapter 8.
 - i) In those two accounts, they both say there was one demon-possessed man.
 - ii) Here we have two. This is not a contradiction. I believe there was two. It simply means that one was much more predominate than the other.
- c) These verses raise a lot of questions and thoughts about these demons.
 - i) These demons call Jesus the Son of God. A title of the Messiah.
 - a) If they knew he was God, why didn't they run away? Why did they approach Jesus in the first place?
 - b) I believe the answer is that they are required to obey Jesus.
 - c) It also means that demons understand that Jesus is God. They have the power to willfully disobey God and still understand Jesus is God.
 - ii) In the same way, people can understand Jesus is God, and still not obey him.
 - a) "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder." (James 2:19, NIV).
 - (1) James' point is that even demons believe Jesus is God.
 - (2) James' question is are you acting upon that belief?
 - iii) The last part of Verse 29 is also interesting. The demons ask Jesus, "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"
 - a) They understand that there is an appointed time when the Devil and all his followers will be destroyed. Despite that knowledge, they still (apparently) choose to follow Satan and not God.
 - b) They don't understand all things. They don't seem to understand why Jesus was there in the first place. They recognize who He is, but not his exact purpose at this time.
 - (1) Most theologians argue that demons can't read our thoughts.
 - (2) This is a possible support verse.

18. Verse 30: Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding.³¹ The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs."

- a) I believe it was Jon Curson who first said, "This is the story of the deviled ham. ☺"
- b) This section gives us some clues and mysteries about demons:
 - i) Why would the demons want to enter the pigs in the first place?
 - a) We're going to read in a few verses that the pigs run off a cliff and die. Were the demons aware of this fact before they made the request?
 - b) Does this mean that a demonic spirit can enter an animal? Apparently so.
 - ii) We read in Mark's account of this story (5:13) that there were 2,000 pigs.
 - a) Does that mean there were at least 2,000 demons in these two guys?
 - b) We do know there were multiple demons because in Mark's Gospel (5:9) we learn that the demons said "'My name is Legion,' he replied, 'for we are many.'"
 - iii) Apparently demons want (or need) to live inside people.
 - a) "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there." (Matthew 12:43-45b, NIV)
- c) Another mystery is why did the demons ask to be sent in the herd of pigs?
 - i) Why didn't they just ask to go free? Why didn't they ask to go into other people?
 - a) We don't know the answer to the question. We do know that Jesus is there, and Jesus is in charge. They had to ask permission in His presence.

19. Verse 32: He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water.
- a) I've always wondered why the demons choose to enter the pigs if they knew the pigs would commit suicide right afterwards.
 - i) You also have to wonder what happened to the demons right after this incident. I don't believe they "die" the same way you and I die.
 - b) If you ever travel to Israel, you can find this exact location of the "pig-suicide". There is only one spot on the Sea of Galilee that has a steep bank. Archeologists have fairly recently discovered a nearby town where they believe this whole incident took place.
 - c) Notice Jesus only said one word. He said, "Go".
 - i) Did he do this out of mercy to help the demon-possessed men? (Probably)
 - ii) Did he do this knowing the pigs were going to kill themselves? (Yes)
 - iii) Maybe he did this to show his disciples that He has more power of a great number of demons. All Jesus has to say is "go" and they must obey Him.
 - iv) Some commentators pick up on the fact that pigs are "non-kosher" to Jews and they shouldn't be farmed in Israel. I'm not sure I agree with that argument. The east side of the Lake was primarily Gentile country. There is no proof these men were Jewish, nor the others in the town were about to discuss in Verses 33-34.
20. Verse 33: Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴ Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.
- a) Notice it doesn't say, "Hey Jesus, thank you for healing these two guys. Boy we were really worried about them. We want to follow you." NO!
 - i) These people asked Jesus to leave their region.
 - b) It would probably help here to read Luke's account of this story. Luke gives more details.
 - i) When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. (Luke 8:34-35, NIV) Verse 37 of Luke: "Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear."
 - ii) Did the people fear the demon-possessed men? (Possibly)
 - iii) Did they fear their economic loss (Possibly). Some people are willing to follow Jesus, unless of course, it affects their source of income!
 - iv) Maybe it was just the incident themselves. Here were these two formerly demon possessed people, now sitting there calm and relaxed. The herd jumped off a cliff.
 - v) My conclusion that the fear in this case is simply a fear of change.
 - a) People grow accustomed to the status quo. Yes the two violent men were there, but everybody was used to them and simply avoided them.
 - b) They were used to making a livelihood off of the pigs. They were gone.
 - c) I believe the people of this town asked Jesus to leave because they were happy "the way they were".
 - d) I believe that is the lesson for us. Some people will refuse to accept Jesus because they don't want to change their lifestyle. They ask Jesus to go away. By the way, Jesus never stays where he is not welcome. He respects our free will. He never says, "I am God, you must obey me". We have to come to Jesus out of free choice.
21. Let's summarize this with some big-picture ideas.
- a) The purpose of Matthew's Gospel is to show the reader that Jesus is the promised Messiah. We get miracle after miracle to demonstrate His power.

- b) We also get life-lessons that Jesus is trying to teach the apostles about trusting Him.
 - i) Those same lessons apply to us as well. We as Christians, with 2,000 years of hindsight and God's power at work, have less of an excuse than the apostles for a lack of trust in Jesus. We read these accounts to remind ourselves of who Jesus is and why we must obey Him for eternal life.

22. Let's pray: Father we thank you for these demonstrations of Jesus power. We thank you that this same power is alive in us, and we have the power to use it for your Glory. Help us to keep You as the center of our lives. Help us to remember that we have eternal life, and out of gratitude we desire to live in obedience to what you call us to do. We ask your blessing on this day, as we walk, moment by moment as your ambassadors. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.