

Day One – Recap of Matthew 8:1-22

I love the imagery of Jesus ascending the mountain (like Moses) and then descending the mountain in order to begin His healing ministry. I don't have a ton of insight from this, it's just one more example of Matthew's intent to cast Jesus as a New Moses. When Jesus had finished his lengthy teaching (perhaps 2-3 hours or more; we have but a small summary via Matthew) and demonstrated the power of His words, He then immediately began demonstrating the power of His hands. The Messiah was to be one who brought physical healing to Israel (Isaiah 40-66) as the ultimate "curse-reverser." He was not only to deal with Israel's sin through an atoning sacrifice, but also offer them a poignant reminder that the Messiah's reign was to be marked by a return to the way things *should* be: free of disease.

This brings up an important discussion point, especially in the wake of some segments of Christianity which claim that Jesus' kingdom is still one which should be free of disease. Many leaders today offer believers the assurance that it is never God's will for them to be sick or experience suffering. Infirmities stem either from some unconfessed sin or a lack of faith, according to these leaders. So what do we do this? Should those in the Kingdom of the healer-Messiah be plagued by illness?

I don't want to be too dismissive of these leaders, but I think it is important to remember the total picture of Jesus' ministry. It was, indeed, characterized by a healing component. It was also characterized, however, with suffering. We can't be too glib about the absence of disease in believers when the one who initiated this Kingdom was Himself *brutally tortured and eventually crucified* on trumped-up charges from a pathetic mock jury. Is a servant better than his master? Certainly not! Our Christian lives are to be marked by victory against the evil one and sin, but they are also to be marked by a willingness to endure the terrible effects which sin, indeed our own sin, have wrought upon the world.

We must be willing to take the victory with the struggle. This text affords us two examples of men who were unwilling to accept the "cold hard facts of life" (to quote Porter Wagoner). They wanted the healing and victory, but ultimately failed to count the true cost of discipleship. They stand as examples of people who witnessed the glory of Jesus' earthly presence but simply could not accept the full picture. The concerns of material comfort and earthly immediacies were too much.

The message of Jesus' life and death does come to bear strongly on how we see the wretched reality of sickness and pain. The message is not, however, immediate freedom from these things. That was not the intent of Jesus' first entry onto the earthly sphere. We must, instead, put our hope in a future day when Christ will return to earth and bring the full realization of what He pictured in His healing.

On that glorious day, we will *never* again have to worry about illness, or anything else for that matter.

Day Two – Read 8:23 – 9:17

The question may be rhetorical in the text, but I think it would be interesting to answer:

“Just what sort of man *is* this, that the wind and sea obey him?”

Day Three

What future “time” could these two demoniacs have been predicting?

What possible insights can we take from this episode about who Jesus is?

Day Four

Think about your own understand of God. How do the phrases “they were afraid” and “they gave glory to God” fit together in your own life?

Think about when Jesus says “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” With everything we learned in the Sermon on the Mount, how does this statement contain a layer of sarcasm?

Day Five

Summarize Jesus’ teaching in 9:14-16.

Since we live 2,000 years after the “newness” of Jesus message, how can we maintain these principles in our own lives?

Day Six

If you are looking to go a little bit deeper in your understanding of the text for this week, try one of these resources:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/index.php?action=getBookSections&cid=1&source=1>

<http://www.evangelibrary.org.uk/members/com/nt/jcr/mt/mat-Index.html>

Sermons Transcripts:

Ligon Duncan - http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/matthew/matthew_vol_1-2/matthew_vol_1-2/index_Matthew_vol_1-2.html

Audio:

John Piper - <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/14/>

S. Lewis Johnson - http://sljinstitute.net/sermons/new%20testament/gospels/matthew/matthew_master.html