

The Church of the Servant King
Home Bible Study
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Matthew
(Lesson SB-MT8A)
Matthew Chapter 8:1-22
Jesus Manifests Himself to Israel

Let's review our outline of the book of Matthew that we established in our first lesson (lesson #SB-MT1). Note that Chapters 8 & 9 fall within the first major section of the gospel, i.e. Jesus presents Himself and His Kingdom to Israel.

- The King and His Kingdom are Presented to Israel (1:1-9:35)
- The King and His Kingdom are Rejected by Israel (9:36-12:50)
- The King Explains the Kingdom Program (13:1-53)
- The King Withdraws to Instruct His Disciples in Light of His Rejection (13:54-20:34)
- The King and His Kingdom are Officially Offered and Rejected by Israel (21:1-22:46)
- The King Proclaims the Fate of Israel's Religious Leaders (23:1-39)
- The King Prophesies Regarding the End of the Age and His Coming Again (24:1-25:46)
- The King is Betrayed, Tried, and Crucified (26:1-27:66)
- The King is Vindicated and Authenticated as the Messiah Through His Resurrection (28:1-20)

Let's recap some of what we've covered in the first seven chapters. We've seen that the book of Matthew was written primarily to Jews. The book has two primary purposes: 1) to prove Jesus is the King/Messiah; and 2) to explain the kingdom program that Jesus offered. An outline of Chapters 1-7 could look like this:

- Chapter 1 – the genealogy of Jesus – Jesus has a legal right to the throne of Israel.
- Chapter 2 – Jesus' birth is a fulfillment of prophecy and a cameo of the entire book is seen (Jews reject; Gentiles worship; Jesus leaves the land only to return)
- Chapter 3 – John the Baptist is Jesus' forerunner
- Chapter 4 – the beginning of Christ's ministry
- Chapters 5-7 – the Sermon on the Mount (Kingdom values explained and if present, the Jews would have received their Messiah)

In Chapters 8 & 9, Jesus manifests Himself to Israel by performing miracles. In Chapter 10, Jesus will send out His twelve apostles (ones sent with authority) to further proclaim the message. In Chapter 11 & 12, opposition to the King builds to a climax where Jesus withdraws in order to explain the kingdom program.

Jesus had explained the standards and values that would be present in those who were ready to receive the Kingdom that Jesus offered in Chapters 5-7. However, the Jews no doubt still had questions on their minds, e.g. if this One was the Messiah, does He have the power to bring about the changes necessary to institute the Kingdom? Does He have a basis for His claim to authority (cf. 7:29)? In Chapters 8 & 9, Jesus establishes His authority through the miracles that He performs.

Also, in Chapters 8 & 9, we see a pattern. Jesus performs three miracles of healing followed by a teaching session on the cost of discipleship (8:18-22), i.e. personal sacrifices will attend being a disciple of the Lord. Then, Jesus performs three miracles demonstrating His power and follows it with teaching on the cost of discipleship (9:9-13), i.e. sometimes a disciple will be misunderstood by the self-righteous crowd who don't have the humility to recognize their true spiritual status. Finally, Jesus performs three miracles of restoration followed by teaching on the cost of discipleship (9:35-38), i.e. those willing to do the Lord's labor are few.

Matthew's arrangement of the pericopes in Chapters 8 & 9 is topical rather than chronological. The other synoptic Gospels parallel Matthew, but not in the same order. Matthew tends to eliminate some detail that the other Gospel writers include. The reason is that Matthew is a highly disciplined writer who takes pains to eliminate everything unrelated to his immediate concerns. Matthew has a certain focus that he desires to maintain.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper (8:1-4)

This was not the first miracle that Jesus had performed. For instance, Jesus had turned water into wine in John 2:1-11 at a wedding feast; healed a nobleman's son in John 4:46-54; and delivered a demoniac in the synagogue in Mark 1:21-28 & Luke 4:33-37. However, this is the first miracle that Matthew records. Several things to note regarding this miracle:

- The only other record of an Israelite being healed of leprosy was the case of Miriam in Numbers 12:10-15.
- The phrase "if you are willing" indicates genuine faith and an acknowledgment of the Lord's sovereign authority. Therefore, the man had a humble attitude that the Lord honored. The man recognized that just because he believed, he would not necessarily be healed. Rather, it would only occur if it was the Lord's will. Compare this passage to Daniel 3:17-18.
- Touching a leper would result in ceremonial defilement to the one who touched the leper (Lev 14:45, 46; Num 5:2, 3; Deut 24:8). However, in this case when Jesus touched the leper, the leper was cleansed.
- Jesus did not want the man to tell anyone prior to presenting himself to the priests. This would have involved quite an effort on the man's part. The man would have had to travel from near the Sea of Galilee in the north to Jerusalem (about 70-80 miles), then offer the sacrifice required by the Mosaic Law (Lev 14:4-32). The purpose was twofold: 1) to obey the Law of Moses and 2) to be a testimony to the religious authorities in Jerusalem that the Messiah had arrived.
- Probably another factor that affected Jesus' command to the man to "tell no one" was that Jesus did not want the people incited to act rashly based upon preconceived and erroneous ideas of the Messiah and His Kingdom (see John 6:14-15).
- The man disobeyed Jesus' orders and began to talk freely per Mark 1:45.

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)

Matthew records this event as if the Centurion himself asked for help from Jesus. However, Luke records the Centurion's use of intermediaries to speak with Jesus (Luke 7:3). Most likely, Matthew did not want to mention the Jewish elders that were sent by the Centurion due to Matthew's desire to maintain focus upon the general nature of Jewish rejection in contrast to Gentile acceptance. Some other observations about this pericope:

- A centurion in the Roman army was a commander of a century, a group of 100 soldiers. This centurion in Capernaum, unlike most Roman soldiers, was well liked and respected by the Jewish people in and around Capernaum because he loved them and built them a synagogue (Luke 7:4-5).
- This centurion had great concern for those under his charge as evidenced by his concern for the servant who was sick and about to die.
- The centurion gave evidence of his humility before the Lord by recognizing the Lord's sovereignty and by recognizing the true place of Israel in God's plan. He recognized that Jesus came to the Jews first as the chosen people. This is evidenced by the centurion's statement in Luke 7:6 that he was "not worthy that You should enter under my roof." It is also evidenced by the centurion's use of the word "Lord." The centurion recognized his unworthiness and thus manifested the attitude that would be ready to accept the kingdom similar to that found in the first beatitude (Matt 5:3).
- The servant was likely a young man. Luke uses *doulos* (slave); whereas Matthew uses *pais* (boy).
- The Centurion understood authority; therefore, he realized that Jesus did not need to travel to him for Jesus' orders to be executed. This miracle serves Matthew's purpose very well.
- All authority belonged to the emperor of Rome and was delegated. To disobey a centurion was tantamount to disobedience to the emperor himself. The centurion understood that Jesus had

- authority delegated from God Himself. When Jesus spoke, God spoke. If Jesus gave a command to be healed, in effect God gave the command. Therefore, it did not matter where Jesus was when he gave the command.
- Jesus marveled because here was a man who was not of the nation or race to whom the kingdom was promised who had greater faith than the sons of the kingdom (8:12). This was the kind of faith that Jesus was looking to find in Israel.
 - Faith such as this made entrance into the kingdom possible regardless of the national, racial, or geographical residence, i.e. the East and the West of verse 11.
 - However, the “sons of the kingdom” (i.e. the Jews) were the ones that possessed the covenants and the promises and should have been the heirs to the kingdom.
 - The commendation of the Gentile centurion was a strong rebuke to the Jewish people since the Israelites thought that they would have priority in the coming kingdom (see Isa 45:14; Zech 8:23; Rom 9:3-5; Eph 2:11, 12).
 - Jesus made it clear that just being a physical descendant of Abraham did not guarantee entrance into His Kingdom.
 - In verse 11, “sit down” literally means “recline” as at a banquet table. The coming Kingdom is commonly portrayed in terms of a feast, particularly a wedding feast (see 22:1-14; Isa 25:6; Rev 19:7-10).
 - “Outer darkness” in verse 12 refers to the fate of those who don’t endure and who will not reign in the kingdom (cf. 22:13; Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12, 13; 2 John 8; Rev 3:11). Some passages refer to those who did not believe in Jesus’ day when the kingdom was offered; some refer to those who either do not believe or who are unfaithful believers in the Church Age; and other passages refer to those who don’t believe in the Tribulation. Each of these categories will not participate to one degree or another in the reign of Christ in the Millennium.
 - Each time the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is used, it refers to judgment on sinners before the Millennium is established. Matthew uses this phrase in 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30 and Luke uses it once in 13:28.

Peter’s Mother-In-Law Healed (8:14-15)

Based upon the parallel accounts of this passage in Mark 1:29-31 and Luke 4:38-39 and the chronological setting contained in those passages, it is likely that Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law on the Sabbath. Matthew omits this detail because it has no bearing on his focus – Jesus’ as King.

Once again, Jesus heals by His touch. Not only was the fever gone, but the woman arose from bed and began to serve the Lord. Usually, when a fever leaves, the sick person’s body is weak for some time, but that is not true here.

Jesus Heals Many More (8:16-17)

Our physical infirmities and sickness is the result of the Fall and its impact upon our lives through the Curse. Jesus bore the consequences of the Fall while on the Cross. Matthew quotes Isaiah 53:4 so as to apply it to the work that Jesus was performing even though Isaiah 53 has a more direct relationship to the payment of the penalty of sin on the Cross. This event has one point of similarity with Old Testament prophecy so Matthew uses the OT prophecy to illustrate that point.

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)

In verses 21-22, the disciple’s father was most likely still alive at this point, because by Levitical law the man would not be out in public if his father had just died. More than likely, the man was aged, so the man wanted to go to his home, wait for his father to die, and then follow Christ. Jesus recognized this as an excuse to not follow Him.