

Matthew 8:1 ¶ When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

After Jesus came down from the mountain from which He had taught His disciples about the kingdom of heaven—the truth about sin, the importance of obedience in humility, the benefits of serving God for His glory—not one’s own, the importance of examining our motives, the right way to pray, etc.—great multitudes continued to follow Him.

Matthew 8:2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Matthew 8:3 And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matthew 8:4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Suddenly, a leper presents himself in worship (the Greek indicates on bended knee) before Jesus and requests healing. He not only requests healing but also declares that he knows Jesus can heal him if He wants to. I really relate to this leper. This is how I approach Jesus so often, “I know You can, but I don’t know if You want to...and I don’t want You to unless it is what is best for _____ according to Your purposes...and I want Your best for _____ good and Your glory.”

Then an amazing thing happens, Jesus touches the leper with His hand as He tells the leper that He is willing; immediately the man’s leprosy disappeared. Lepers were supposed to stay away from people in special colonies outside the gates of the city; they were supposed to announce their presence by crying out, “Unclean.” No man would touch a leper because that would make him unclean.

Jesus wasn’t looking for fame; He told the man not to tell anyone what He had done. He instructed the man to go to the priest and offer the gift commanded by Moses in the law (Leviticus 14) and let them see for themselves that he had been healed. Mark adds a little bit more to the story.

Mark 1:45 “But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.”

I don’t think the man was trying to dishonor Jesus; I think he just couldn’t contain his joy.

Matthew 8:5 ¶ And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

Matthew 8:6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

Matthew 8:7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

Matthew 8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou

shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

Matthew 8:9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

When Jesus came into the city of Capernaum after the healing of the leper, a Roman centurion approached Him on behalf of his servant that was at home sick of the palsy (paralyzed) and suffering greatly. Luke informs us that the servant was “ready to die.”

Luke 7:2-5 “And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.”

I think it is also important to note that the centurion addressed Jesus as “Lord.” This is an address of great respect and humility from an officer in the Roman army.

Luke also tells us that the centurion approached Jesus through the Jewish elders of the city. These elders encouraged Jesus to help the man because he loved the Jewish people and had even built them a synagogue.

Jesus immediately offered to go to the centurion’s home to heal the servant in spite of the existing laws. The centurion was a Gentile; and, according to Peter when he visited Cornelius, Jews were forbidden to visit the homes of Gentiles.

Acts 10:28 “And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation”

This was actually part of Jewish tradition and not God’s law. The centurion quickly declared himself unworthy that Jesus should enter his home. He declared his confidence that if Jesus would but speak the word, his servant would be healed. He understood authority because he was a man under authority and also had soldiers under his own authority. Using that authority, he could tell a soldier, “Go,” and he would go, and to another soldier, “Come,” and he would come, and to his servant, “Do this,” and he would do it. He believed that the authority of Jesus extended to the supernatural.

Yes, there is a discrepancy in the two records of this miracle; but the primary facts are included in both. Does this mean the scripture cannot be trusted? No. It’s no different than hearing two witnesses in court testify to the facts of a case. Different things stand out to each witness. Luke’s writing always includes much detail. Coffman offers the following explanation: “...of the so-called discrepancies, it may be said that there are none when proper allowance is made for the common practice of ascribing to one person the deeds he actually did through an agent, or the omission of details, or addition of details, by one

narrator as compared with another. Such things are the only sure evidences of independent witnesses, casting no suspicion of inaccuracy, but rather corroborating and proving the validity of the account."

Matthew 8:10 When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Matthew 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 8:12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 8:13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Jesus was amazed at the words of the centurion and declared to those following Him that he had not found so great faith even among the Jews. He went on to prophesy that "many" Gentiles would come from east to west—the breadth of the earth—to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom. This was not a new revelation.

Genesis 12:1–3 "Now the LORD had said unto Abram...And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Isaiah 42:1 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

Isaiah 42:6–7 "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

By the way, this is a declaration that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob still live and will be a part of the kingdom.

Sadly, in spite of a history replete with miracles and fulfilled prophecies to affirm the truth of God's word, power and authority, there would be descendants of Abraham who would not be allowed in the kingdom. In fact, they would be cast out into outer darkness and eternal suffering.

Then Jesus informed the centurion that his faith had resulted in the healing of his servant. Matthew emphasizes that the servant was healed that very hour.

Matthew 8:14 ¶ And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

Matthew 8:15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

It would seem that Jesus stayed at Peter and Andrew's home when they were in Capernaum.

Mark 1:29 "And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John."

Coming home one day, he saw that Peter's mother-in-law was in bed sick with a fever. All Jesus did was touch her hand and the fever was gone and her strength restored. She immediately got up and began attending to their needs.

Side note: Isn't it interesting that Peter, whom Catholics recognize as the first pope, was a married man; yet priests and popes are required to be unmarried and celibate?

Matthew 8:16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick:

Matthew 8:17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

Once word got around that Jesus was in town, many showed up outside Peter's house seeking healing. Jesus healed each and every one. Some were possessed by devils and others suffered various physical infirmities. Once again Matthew makes note that all Jesus did was in fulfillment of prophecy.

Isaiah 53:4 "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...."

In context, the passage in Isaiah is describing the Messiah; and any Jewish reader of Matthew's gospel would have understood that he was declaring that Jesus was the Messiah.

Matthew 8:18 ¶ Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

Jesus realized that for Him and His disciples to get any rest they would have to get away. So, He issues the command for them to go across the Sea of Galilee to the other side.

Matthew 8:19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

Matthew 8:20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

"A certain scribe" piped up and declared that he would follow Jesus wherever He went. Jesus didn't say, "Come on." He told the man that to follow Him would require sacrifice. He didn't even have a home to call His own. He didn't seem concerned about acquiring possessions. Isn't it interesting that those recognized as the most popular church leaders today are intent upon accumulating all the wealth they can?

Matthew 8:21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Matthew 8:22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

The wording in Luke 9 of this account is a bit clearer: *“And he [Jesus] said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.”*

The scribe came volunteering to follow Jesus; this man was invited to follow Jesus. This man doesn't want to tell Jesus “no” outright, so he asks permission to come after his father dies. Jesus doesn't hesitate; He tells the man that the dead (spiritually) can bury the dead (physically).

This sounds harsh, but the truth is that it was more important to get out and preach the truth of the kingdom of God than it was to bury the dead. Only men of faith can preach the kingdom. Those who are dead in trespasses and sins will remain that way for eternity if they don't repent of their sin and place their faith in the Messiah to attain eternal life and entrance to His kingdom.

I also couldn't help but think of something Jesus said that is recorded later in Matthew.

Matthew 10:37 “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

This mother has to look in that mirror long and deep and often.

Matthew 8:23 ¶ And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

Matthew 8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

Matthew 8:25 And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

Matthew 8:26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

Matthew 8:27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Finally, Jesus gets in the ship with His disciples to go across the sea to the other side as previously commanded. Once they were out to sea a great storm arose and waves came crashing over the ship. Jesus was sleeping right through it all; however, the disciples were afraid and sure they were about to die. They finally woke Jesus up and told Him they were going to die. Jesus was disappointed. He asked them why they were so afraid and had such little faith. Still, He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and the storm stopped.

The disciples were amazed. They still didn't get it. They couldn't believe that

this “man” could command the winds and the sea to do His will. On the one hand, they had followed Jesus in the belief that He was the Messiah. They had seen Him work many miracles. It makes me think that they did not understand that not only would the Messiah be a descendant of David, He would be God in the flesh, Emmanuel, “God with us.” I don’t think they fully grasped that truth until after His resurrection.

Matthew 8:28 ¶ And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

Matthew 8:29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

Matthew 8:30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

Matthew 8:31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

Matthew 8:32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

Mark adds some information to the event.

Mark 5:6–10 “But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.... And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.”

The ship landed on the far shore in the country of the Gergesenes (Gadarenes in Mark and Luke and most translations of Matthew), one of the cities of the Decapolis. They encountered two men possessed with devils coming out of the tombs and preventing travel to the city. One of the men must have been very dominant since the other two gospels focus entirely on him. Though the men had never met Jesus, the devils that possessed them recognized Him right away as the “Son of God.” Mark notes that one of the men fell down in worship before Jesus. Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to leave the man, and the spirit charged Him in the name of the most high God not to torment him. Jesus didn’t lose His temper; he asked the devil his name. The devil replied “Legion,” because they were many.

The devils wanted to know if Jesus had come to torment them before the appointed time? Luke also adds another interesting bit of information.

Luke 8:31 “And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.”

The “deep” is a reference to the “abyss...bottomless pit,” a place we learn more about in Revelation, the place from which the demon locusts ascend that will torment men for five months during the last seven years on earth before Jesus returns as King of kings.

This says a lot to me about the spiritual warfare that is ever at work in the invisible part of our reality. These devils often enter our visible reality by possessing the bodies of those vulnerable to them. Note that the devils recognized the authority that Jesus held over them. It is also interesting to note that they were aware of an appointed time of coming torment and that Jesus would be the source of that torment.

Matthew notes that a herd of pigs were feeding in an area “a good way off.” The devils asked Jesus not to send them to the abyss, but to allow them to possess the herd of pigs. He let them. The pigs (all 2,000 of them per Mark) responded by running wildly down the hill into the sea and drowning.

That has always made me wonder. Why did they want to possess the pigs to begin with? I guess just like their leader, Satan, they like to “steal, kill, and destroy.”

John 10:10 “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Matthew 8:33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. Matthew 8:34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

The men in charge of the pigs immediately ran to the city to tell everyone what had happened—about the pigs and the possessed men. The whole city decided to go out and meet Jesus and beg Him to leave.

Again, Luke adds information.

Luke 8:35–37 “Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.”

Instead of being happy for the miracle that had restored the men to their right minds, they were afraid of the power that Jesus possessed that could bring about such healing. They not only asked Jesus to leave, but also asked Him never to come back again.

Mark adds a bit more information.

Mark 5:18–20 “And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.”

The man that had been healed wanted to become one of Jesus' disciples. Jesus told him that he could better serve Him by going home and telling all his friends all that God had done for him and how He had shown him such grace and mercy. The man didn't argue; he left and began declaring throughout the Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him. People were amazed when they saw him and heard his story.

Should we not follow this man's example? We should take advantage of every opportunity to share with others all that Jesus has done for us.