

Matthew 9:1 ¶ And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

Jesus left the area of the Decapolis and traveled by boat back to Capernaum, "His own city."

Matthew 9:2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

Matthew 9:3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

Note: I am including excerpts from Luke's account of these miracles when they provide further information.

Luke 5:17–21 "And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

As you can see, Matthew's summary did not include the special effort that was needed to get the sick man before Jesus. Such extreme effort to get the man before the Lord evidenced great faith in His ability to heal the man. It gave evidence of hearts that were ready to recognize Jesus as Lord in contrast to the hard hearts of the scribes who were only looking for an opportunity to discredit Him. The scribes immediately reasoned that the Lord's words of spiritual healing were blasphemy. Matthew indicates that this reasoning was in their thoughts, not spoken aloud. They knew that only God can forgive sins, and they refused to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Matthew 9:4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Matthew 9:5 For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

Matthew 9:6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

Matthew 9:7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

Matthew 9:8 But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Luke 5:22-26 "But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to

say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day."

I think it is important to note that Matthew tells us that Jesus knew their thoughts. This would have been a supernatural revelation from the Holy Spirit to the man Jesus. Even though they hadn't said anything openly, Jesus spoke to them regarding the thoughts that were in their hearts. The same power and authority that He possessed to work miracles of healing were the same necessary to grant forgiveness of sins. In fact, the miracles of healing testified to that very truth—the truth that He was the promised Messiah foretold by the prophets.

Isaiah 35:5–6 "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing...."

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...."

The fact that Jesus addressed their thoughts should have testified to the power of God at work in Him, but the hearts of the scribes were hard and not open to the revelation of truth before them.

Jesus then turned to the sick man and commanded him to pick up his bed and go home—which he did, glorifying God the whole way. The multitudes glorified God also, but their response was one of amazement and fear at being in the presence of a man that God had endued with such power.

I think it is significant to note that Jesus first pronounced forgiveness of sins before dealing with the man's physical infirmity because his greatest need was for spiritual healing. Some conclude that the man's sickness was a direct consequence of sin in his life. The fact that Jesus pointed out that forgiveness of sins was a harder thing to prove and then healed the man gave evidence to God's seal of approval on what Jesus said—His claim to be Messiah. If it had been blasphemy as the scribes thought, do you think God would have allowed the man's healing?

Matthew 9:9 ¶ And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

Matthew 9:10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Matthew next chooses to relate his own call as a disciple of Jesus. From the other gospel accounts we learn that Matthew was known as Levi the son of Alphaeus. Jesus saw Matthew collecting taxes and stopped and asked him to follow Him as

one of His disciples. Suddenly we see one of the most despised men in Israel getting up and following the Lord without question.

Though nothing in scripture supports this, I believe Matthew must have heard about Jesus and had probably even heard John the Baptist as he preached his message of repentance. In fact, chapter ten lists James the son of Alphaeus as one of the disciples; and it is likely that this was Matthew's brother. If so, I think he had heard enough to come to the point that he was very sorry for his sins and wanting to make a change in his life. Jesus gave him the perfect opportunity for making that new start in life.

Luke tells us that Matthew prepared a great feast in his own home to honor the Lord Jesus. (As to when is disputed, but that is insignificant.) It seems that he invited many of his fellow tax-collectors and others recognized as sinners or known as disreputable in the community.

Matthew 9:11 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

Matthew 9:12 But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

Matthew 9:13 But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

How the Pharisees "saw" the dinner I don't know, but they questioned the disciples why their Master was eating with publicans and sinners—those whose fellowship would be shunned by most in the Jewish community. When Jesus became aware of their questions, He answered the Pharisees by declaring that only people who are sick need a physician. In other words, only those that recognized that they were in need of help sought help. He challenged the Pharisees to go and learn what God meant by declaring that He wanted mercy rather than sacrifice (a quote from Hosea).

Hosea 6:6 "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

By telling the Pharisees to go and learn what He meant, Jesus identified them as people going through the motions and making sacrifices for sin but with no true heart of recognition of their unworthiness before God or worshipping Him in love. Mercy is exemplified by showing kindness to others as a loving response to the kindness God has shown you. The Pharisees were clueless regarding such compassion; they were focused on the letter of the law, not the heart of the law.

Matthew 9:14 ¶ Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?

Matthew 9:15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.

It seems that the disciples of John also had questions as to why Jesus did not

adhere to the traditions of men that had become synonymous with the law as did they and the Pharisees in the area of fasting. Other translations identify the “children of the bridechamber” as “wedding guests,” and that makes more sense in the context. Jesus pointed out that mourning (as represented by fasting) is not appropriate in the presence of the bridegroom; it would only be appropriate in his absence.

I thought the reference to Jesus as a bridegroom was significant to these disciples of John. John had already made reference to Jesus as the bridegroom.

John 3:27–29 “John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

Scripture also reveals that the church is recognized as the bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:31–32 “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

We also know from scripture that the redeemed of Israel will be among the guests at the wedding feast of Jesus and His bride, the church. This truth is specifically taught through the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. (See topical study, “The Olivet Discourse.”)

I came across this quote from Ray Stedman regarding this passage that was thought-provoking: “One reason why so much of the church today is written off by people who have come to see what Christians are like is that they are turned off by the morbidity and dullness of what we call worship. In many church services across this land today the diet is what can only be described as predictable pablum, dished-up Pollyanna, as dull and unexciting as can be! Many services are so totally predictable that, without being present, you can look at your watch and, at any given moment, say what is happening. The preaching which comes forth is so shallow and repetitive that people have turned off their ears and no longer listen. Why they subject themselves to coming at all, I do not understand! I honestly do not blame those who do not come. Church people complain that men are out playing golf and boating on Sunday morning. But until the church recovers the excitement and joy of a wedding feast, and the people are gladsome of heart, they cannot be blamed for not coming. When the church does recover what Jesus has indicated here, then the meetings will be full again.”

Matthew 9:16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

Matthew 9:17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine

into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Luke 5:37–39 “And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish....No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.”

Jesus continues His thought by making two obvious observations: 1) You can't mend an old garment with new cloth because it will end up making the tear worse, and 2) You can't put new wine in old wineskins because they will eventually burst. I think that basically Jesus is declaring His approach to the law to the new wine that God wants to expand and grow among His people. It would not be able to fix what was lacking in the old covenant, much like a patch on an old garment; it would replace the old covenant and fulfill the heart of God contained in that covenant with a new covenant. Luke points out that many refuse to open their heart to something new because they are so comfortable with what is old. They think change represents something worse.

Matthew 9:18 ¶ While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

Matthew 9:19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so *did* his disciples.

Luke 8:41–42 “And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying.”

While Jesus is talking to John's disciples, a certain ruler falls in worship before Jesus begging Him to come and restore his dead daughter to life. Luke tells us that this man was Jairus, a ruler in the synagogue; he also tells us that his daughter was about 12 years old. The fact that Jairus was identified as a ruler in the synagogue reveals that there were at least a few in religious leadership whose hearts were open to the truth about Jesus. This man certainly believed that Jesus could raise his daughter from death to life. Immediately, Jesus and His disciples arose and followed the man.

Matthew 9:20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and touched the hem of his garment:

Matthew 9:21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

Matthew 9:22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

Luke 8:43–48 “And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And when the

woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

An interesting thing happened on the way to Jairus' home. It seems that quite a crowd was following Jesus. In that crowd was a woman that had been suffering from an issued of blood for twelve years. Luke tells us that she had spent all that she had going from doctor to doctor seeking help, but in vain. She had determined that if she could but touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be healed. Imagine her surprise when after surreptitiously touching His garment, Jesus turns around asking who had touched Him. Jesus declared that He knew someone had touched Him because He felt power go out from Him. The woman knew that her action had been discovered and fell down afraid before Jesus telling Him what she had done and why. Jesus gently encouraged the woman and declared that it was her faith that had resulted in her healing. He then told her to go in peace.

I often think of this principle in scripture—It is according to your faith that miracles occur. My prayer echoes that of the apostles: "Lord, Increase our faith." And of the father of the demon-possessed child, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Matthew 9:23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

Matthew 9:24 He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

Matthew 9:25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

Matthew 9:26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

Luke 8:49–56 "While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden....and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done."

The entourage finally arrived at the ruler's house where a great show of mourning was taking place. Jesus informed them that the child was only asleep, and they laughed Him to scorn. He turned to Jairus and told him not to be afraid, but to continue to have faith. When Jesus went into the house, He only allowed Peter, James, John and the parents of the child to go with Him; everyone else was put out of the house. Jesus took the girl by the hand telling her to get up, and she did. Luke makes a point that "her spirit came again"; in other words, she had been dead and was restored to life. Jesus then told the astonished parents to give her something to eat and not tell anyone else what He had done.

It is so interesting to me that Jairus ran to Jesus with complete faith that He could restore his daughter to life and then was astonished when He actually did it. I so identify. I know without a shadow of a doubt that God can do anything, yet to believe that He will in response to my faith is just sometimes more than I can actually process—even in light of so many wonderful answers to prayers.

Matthew 9:27 ¶ And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.*

Matthew 9:28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

Matthew 9:29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

Matthew 9:30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*.

Matthew 9:31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

After leaving the home of Jairus, Matthew notes that two blind men followed Jesus crying out, “Son of David, have mercy on us.” I think the fact that they identified Him as the Son of David indicates that they believed Him to be the promised Messiah. It seems that the blind men followed Him into the house when he got home (back to Matthew’s house? Peter’s house?). Jesus asked the blind men if they really believed that He could heal them, and they assured him they did. So, Jesus touched their eyes and declared that same principle of faith: “According to your faith be it unto you.” Evidently, their faith was real because their eyes were opened and they could see. Jesus once again told those He had helped not to tell anyone what He had done. However, when they left, they couldn’t wait to tell everyone what Jesus had done for them.

I don’t think these guys were trying to dishonor Jesus; they just couldn’t contain their excitement.

I can’t help but compare how Jesus functioned vs. how so many in the ministry function today. He was ever trying to avoid fame while so many today do everything in their power to promote their own fame.

Matthew 9:32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

Matthew 9:33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

Matthew 9:34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

Matthew now makes note of another miraculous healing—that of a dumb man possessed with a devil. The implication is that the devil prevents the man from speaking. Once the devil had been cast out, the man could speak and the multitudes once again were amazed. This type of miracle was unheard of in

Israel. David Guzik provides insight: “In the Jewish understanding of demon possession, this man could not be helped. This was because most rabbis of that day thought that the essential first step in exorcism was to compel or trick the demon into telling you its name. The name was then thought of as a handle by which the demon could then be removed. Therefore, a demon that made a man mute had cleverly prevented the revelation of the name of the demon inhabiting the victim, and therefore prevented the exorcism.”

The Pharisees, however, responded to this miracle from hearts that were hard and jealous; they declared that Jesus was acting in the power of “the prince of devils.”

Adam Clarke made a pertinent observation: “It is a consummate piece of malice to attribute the works of God to the devil. Envy cannot suffer the approbation which is given to the excellencies of others. Those whose hearts are possessed by this vice speak the very language of the devil.”

Matthew 9:35 ¶ And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Matthew declares that Jesus went about the cities and villages in the area, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and working miracles of healing.

I think it is interesting to note that not only did Jesus heal those with faith, He also healed all others that came to Him. I think He singled out those that approached Him with faith for our benefit. He is no longer with us in body, but He is still with us in the person of His Spirit and just as ready to respond to our faith.

Matthew 9:36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

Matthew 9:37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few;

Matthew 9:38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

As Jesus continued to travel among the cities and towns, He was moved with compassion for the people He saw. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. Their religious leaders were proud and pompous and focused on the letter of the law and not the heart of the law. In fact, they were most focused on following the established traditions of men than obeying God’s word as revealed in scripture. He noted to His disciples that the potential for harvest was great, but there were not enough laborers to reap the harvest. He urged them to pray that God would send forth laborers into His harvest.

Another good quote from Guzik: "This is a prayer we must pray, but we can only pray it honestly if we pray with an ear open to hearing Him tell us, 'You go into the harvest.'"

I think it is significant that the Lord describes the people as "faint," indicating that they were depressed and had lost hope. They were under the yoke of Rome and their hopes for Messiah were dim. Why? Because they had not been taught God's word correctly. Their religious leaders had placed them under a spiritual burden just as cumbersome as their physical burden under Rome.

I can't help but think of some previous verses in Matthew spoken by the Lord regarding the souls that would make up the harvest of souls that would enjoy eternal life in His presence.

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."