

Healing, Teaching and Miracles...

Matthew 8

This chapter includes several accounts of individuals or groups of people being healed. Notice (i) different people are healed (a Jewish leper, a Roman centurion, Peter's mother-in-law, unnamed crowds); (ii) their requests are made in different ways (the leper had faith, the centurion showed faith on behalf of his servant, the crowds showed different kinds of faith); and (iii) Jesus used different methods to heal (a touch that was forbidden, a word spoken from afar, a tender touch). We need to understand that physical healing is an area where God especially shows his sovereignty, and acts as he chooses and not necessarily as we might expect...

Jesus cleanses a leper (Matthew 8 v 1 to 4)

- How would you describe the leper's attitude to Jesus? What did he want in addition to healing? What risks did the leper take? What risks did Jesus take?
- Why do you think Jesus commanded the leper to be somewhat secretive about his healing? Why was he to show himself to the priests?

Jesus heals a centurion's servant (Matthew 8 v 5 to 13)

- What was unusual about the centurion – in his attitude towards his servant, and in his attitude to Jesus? Why was Jesus “astonished” (v 10)?
- How did the centurion's understanding of the military ‘chain of command’ (v 9) help him believe in Jesus' authority over sickness? The centurion's faith causes Jesus to announce that there will be non-Jews in the kingdom of heaven, who will even sit down to dinner with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – this was an earth-shattering idea to many Jews in Jesus' day...

Two more healing incidents (Matthew 8 v 14 to 17)

- How does Peter's mother-in-law show a fitting response for someone healed by Jesus?
- How does Matthew show that Jesus' healing of many who were demon-possessed or sick was a partial fulfilment of Isaiah 53 v 4? When would that prophecy be completely fulfilled?

Jesus teaches about discipleship (Matthew 8 v 18 to 22)

- Did Jesus tell the scribe not to follow him? Why do you think he tried to put him off?
- The other hesitant follower may have meant he wanted to stay at home and care for his father until he died. But what does Jesus say is the most important thing?

Jesus shows his power over wind and waves (Matthew 8 v 23 to 27)

- Jesus rebukes the disciples – why? Then he “rebukes” the winds and the waves – why? Why were the men “amazed”? What question did this miracle prompt? See Psalm 89 v 8, 9.

Jesus' power over demonic spirits (Matthew 8 v 28 to 34)

- What did the demons know about Jesus? What did they understand about their destiny? Why do you think Jesus allowed the exorcised demons to enter and destroy the (2,000) pigs?
- What does this episode tell us about the destructive intentions and power of demons? What does it tell us about the value Jesus places on a human life?
- But wasn't this unfair on the owner of the pigs? What does verse 34 tell us about the townsfolk's priorities?