

Jesus the Healer...

Matthew 9

As this chapter contains several miracles of healing, it is important to see Jesus' healing ministry in proper perspective: (i) The Messiah's role as healer was clearly prophesied in Old Testament passages like Isaiah 35 v 5 (*"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped..."*), so the healing miracles were a testimony to the fact that not only was Jesus sent by God, but he was the anticipated Messiah; (ii) Jesus' miracles were not primarily calculated for crowd effect, but to minister to the needs of humble people; (iii) the presence of so much sickness in Israel was evidence of their unfaithfulness to God's covenant and low spiritual state (compare with Exodus 15 v 26, *"If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes... I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you."*) – what about sickness in today's society? (*Adapted from David Guzik, Study Guide to Matthew, Enduring Word, Blue Letter Bible*)

A paralyzed man is forgiven and healed (Matthew 9 v 1 to 8)

- When Jesus said 'Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven', how do you think the paralytic felt? How did he feel when he had been healed? What did the teachers of the law think? How did Jesus react?
- There was a crowd present, yet no one disputed the fact that an amazing miracle had taken place. Instead, how did the onlookers react?

The call of Matthew the tax collector (Matthew 9 v 9 to 13)

- In verse 9 we are told Matthew did something – what? In verse 10 Matthew went a step further – what did he do and why? What can we learn from his example?
- What was Jesus' attitude towards the 'tax collectors and sinners'? Why did he adopt this attitude?
- What does verse 13 (from Hosea 6 v 6) teach us about the character of God?

Old and new covenants (Matthew 9 v 14 to 17)

- What do the parables (word pictures) mean? Who is the bridegroom? Who is the bride? What is meant by the old garment and the old wineskins – and the new cloth, new wine and new wineskins? Is it right to fast? Is it wrong not to fast?

Two people are healed – a woman and a little girl (Matthew 9 v 18 to 26)

- Two stories are woven together. How did the woman's motives for following Jesus differ from those of the other people crowding around? Why did Jesus make the woman publicly admit what she had done? Why do you think she wanted to go unnoticed?
- What do you think Jairus' reaction would have been to the delay caused by the woman? What do you think Jairus felt when he was told that his daughter was not dead but asleep?

Three more accounts of healing (Matthew 9 v 27 to 38)

- Earlier in this chapter we are told that God had given 'authority' to Jesus. How does he show that authority over blindness, demon-possession, and every disease and sickness? In what other ways does Jesus exercise divine authority? How can this help increase our faith?
- "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers..."? What sort of work do you think Jesus is talking about? See verse 35.

Prayer – Lord, the harvest indeed is plentiful but the workers are few; we think of those who teach your truth, those who preach the good news of God's kingdom, those who work to heal every disease and sickness. We therefore pray, Lord, that you will send out more workers into the harvest fields. Amen.