

XXXVI. Matthew in Biblical Perspective  
*A Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King*  
“A Day of Miracles and Ministry”

Matthew 8:1–17

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We will be looking at Matthew 8 for this study. I'd like to start by looking at Matthew 4:23–5:1 which says [23] *And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. [24] So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. [25] And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan. [5:1] Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.* Now let's look at Matthew 8:1 which says [1] *When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We are back to Matthew picking up this series where I left off at the end of Matthew 7. I'm going to give you a very brief review as we plunge ahead in Matthews 8 through 10. As we work our way through this text I want you to keep in mind two things. One is I have had the privilege to lead 13 groups over to the land of the Bible (Israel) and many have always asked me what the most exciting moment is for me on that trip. The most exciting moment for me is where all this takes place that I'm going to preach on in this study. When I stand at the historic place where this took place I have two conflicting emotions. This text gives me the chance to tell you at the conclusion my two conflicting emotions. The other thing I want you to think about is in the uncovering of literature from that period they have uncovered a prayer that some of the Rabbis would pray every morning in the first century in the days of Jesus. I will give you that prayer at the end of this study. I'm running the risk of every woman in this congregation utterly disliking me for the rest of your life.

Having said that let's do an overview. Why did Matthew write this book? What is the theme in the Gospel of Matthew? It is an extensive biography that Matthew wrote for a specific purpose. The Gospel of Matthew is an evangelistic biography declaring that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Christ of Scripture, who was sent by the Father, verified by the Holy Spirit, and now proclaimed as King and Savior to all the nations until He returns in glory. Matthew was a Jew and worked and lived in Capernaum which is where this text takes place. Matthew is writing to get to us but his heart is to the Jewish people. He wants them to know all that God has promised in His Word for a Messiah and that Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, Son of Man. Jesus is Prophet, Priest and King. Matthew wanted the Jews to know not to reject Jesus but to receive Him, because He is the promised Messiah. This saving King who has come for our redemption, is to be proclaimed as Christ and Lord beginning from you, Israel, to all the nations. He will gather into His Kingdom from all the nations all of His people until He comes again in glory. That's Matthew's burden.

Matthew was a Jew who was converted. He was a man who was utterly despised by other Jews but he loved his countrymen. He was despised because a tax collector was basically a traitor. They went to work for the Roman Empire and their oppression of Israel and they collected the taxes for the Romans. They weren't given a salary. They were expected to steal. That's why later on Zacchaeus talks about giving money back to people that he had stolen from. Where the trade routes crossed at Capernaum, Matthew had a place where he collected taxes and robbed people for his own living. Then he gets converted and now he wants the Gospel that converted him to go to his people so he writes the book of Matthew.

The Gospel of Matthew is not strictly chronological. He has a basic chronology but he is theologically driven to affirm that Jesus is the Messiah, sent by the Father, verified by the Holy Spirit therefore when he is working along this chronology he will borrow things from other moments to fit them into a moment, in order to get across the glorious exaltation of Christ. That is his burden. So it's basically a chronological biography but he will move things into certain sections to get a point across. He will also arrange his Gospel into five books. His burden is the Jewish people but we will get blessed by it. Up until the day of Jesus they had all of these types pointing to Christ.

The premier type of all types was not Aaron or David but Moses, who God revealed Himself through setting him up as a type, pointing to Christ and starting to give us the Word of God. Moses wrote for us five books called the Pentateuch – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. I don't think it's any accident that the Holy Spirit led Matthew to arrange his material in five books. Three years ago we covered two of those books. Book number one covers the birth and adolescent life of Christ up to His ordination and installation at His baptism and then into the wilderness. Then He begins His public ministry and that book ends with a statement at Matthew 4:23. Jesus is going about doing two things – healing and teaching. Crowds are being affected as He is healing and teaching.

As He sees the crowd we then move to book two. Book two is when Jesus goes up on a mountain. He takes a seat and all these crowds come to Him, with His disciples surrounding Him and He gives the first of six recorded sermons of Jesus in the Bible. Five of them are in the book of Matthew. The first one He gives is the Sermon on the Mount and that becomes book number two. The King from the mountain gives how by grace, the Law of God is lived in love, not the Law can't save you or sustain you but it is by God's grace in Christ. Where did Moses go to get God's Law? He went up on a mountain and he met Jesus up there who is the second Person of the Trinity, in the pillar of cloud and fire. The Lawgiver gives the Law and Moses comes down from the mountain. Now the One whom Moses met, who gave the Law, goes up on a mountain and He takes the position of the Teacher. He sits down and all the people come and stand around Him. When did we get this all turned around where the teacher sits and the people stand?

He sits down on the mountain and Jesus, the Teacher, proclaims this Law's gracious work to bring you to an end of yourself that you would come to Him. Then He by grace will save you. He will empower you. He will write that Law on your heart and now you will live it out, not to be saved but because you love your King and Savior. This is what His Kingdom will look like as it pervades the world. Matthew finishes book two at the end of Matthew 7. So how does book three start? Jesus comes down the

mountain and He meets the crowds. When Moses came down the mountain he met the crowd but they were doing idolatry and sin and many perished on that day. Jesus will come down the mountain to the sinners. What will He do?

Matthew takes three miracles that I believe we're done in one day and he sets up for you the life and ministry of Jesus. What was Jesus doing before He went up on the mountain? He was healing and teaching. He comes down from the mountain not to bring judgment but to bear judgment, so He goes around healing and teaching. Matthew gives us three miracles of Jesus the day He came down from the mountain. If the Sermon on the Mount was delivered where I think it was, it is about a 45 to 50 minute walk from there to Capernaum, Jesus' adopted home town. He will end up at His adopted headquarters which is the home of Peter's mother-in-law. As Matthew gives us these three miracles Jesus did in this 24 hour period he tells us why those miracles are happening and why other miracles will happen. The miracles are not the focus but they're a means to an end. He gives us an insight into what they were.

I'd like to now walk through these three miracles in Matthew 8. Matthew 8:2-4 says [2] *And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."* [3] *And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean."* *And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* [4] *And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."* Leprosy had been dealt with for both spiritual and physical reasons in the Law.

In Leviticus 13 and 14, leprosy is dealt with in the Law. It tells you how to know its leprosy and then it tells you what the leper had to do which for physical reasons he was being quarantined from the people because various forms of leprosy are contagious. It's a pretty horrific death process. They would be quarantined after the priest had confirmed it by the standards that were given. Then if by God's sovereign work they were healed the next step was they could leave their isolation, go back to the temple, the priest would proclaim them healed and they could go back into society of God's people. Also in the context of Leviticus 13 and 14 leprosy becomes a physical illustration of sin, its contagion, its destructiveness and it's used as such throughout the Bible as an illustration of sin.

First of all, note the courage of the leper. He comes to Jesus and he is supposed to be put away but he has the courage to come and find Christ. Secondly, this Jewish leper is confident. He doesn't wonder if Jesus can heal leprosy after knowing that Jesus has gone around healing and teaching. The leper says "You can make me whole!" There was no doubt in his mind that Jesus could heal him. Thirdly, you see the leper's humility in multiple ways. He calls Jesus "Lord" and when he gets in front of Jesus he kneels. One of the words for worship, the root word is used in this passage and it's developed and it means kneel. So his courage brought him there. His confidence knew he could and then in humility he said "If You will. You are sovereign, not me." Jesus doesn't heal everyone even though He can but He sovereignly heals this man. Jesus says "I will, be clean."

Notice that this man, like miracle ministries today, he didn't have to go through a process of getting washed off and doing this or that. No, when a miracle comes, he is healed immediately. Immediately he was cleansed. It was done. He was restored. What did Jesus do? He then told him to not tell anyone and there were multiple reasons why

He did that. One reason is He is not using the leper or His healing or the miracle to get a crowd. There is another reason He is doing the miracle. Look at His heart, the pastoral heart of Jesus. This man has been isolated and Jesus has healed him.

Notice what Jesus did when the leper came up to Him. Jesus touched Him. Leviticus 13 forbids that. The Lawgiver transcends His Law. Why? It is because neither leprosy nor sin which it illustrates, can infect Him. When Jesus touches the leper there is no leprosy going to Jesus. When He touches him He cleanses him. God's grace is greater than our sin and all of our infirmities. Then He goes back to Leviticus and tells the leper to go tell the priest for they will affirm this healing and then you can re-enter the society of God's people. You are no longer isolated. You are now reconciled. So he sends him on a path not to promote Jesus the miracle healer but he sends him on a path to be reconciled now that the healing power of Christ has touched him.

Now Jesus enters Capernaum and meets a Gentile Centurion. A centurion was kind of like a Roman captain. A captain had a squad of a hundred soldiers. Capernaum is a place where the Romans are collecting taxes. They have a squad of soldiers there and so the centurion comes out and meets Jesus. Notice again how he comes to Jesus. Matthew 8:5–13 says [5] *When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him,* [6] *“Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.”* [7] *And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.”* [8] *But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.* [9] *For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”* [10] *When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.* [11] *I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven,* [12] *while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* [13] *And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.*

The centurion had courage. Why would I say that? Who were the tyrants that had Israel under oppression? It was Rome. Who did the centurion work for? He worked for Rome. How did Rome keep them under oppression? They did it through military might. The centurion was the commander of the people that oppressed them yet here are the crowds of Jews following Jesus and he walks right in the middle of them. He courageously comes to Christ. He confidently comes to Christ, just like the leper. He says to Jesus “You can make him whole.” Then he humbly comes to Christ as he says “if You will.” This centurion reflects the Jewish leper. Jesus said He would heal him and then this centurion Gentile takes it to another level. He says to Jesus “You don't need to go touch him, all You need to do is give the Word.” He knows that if he a centurion has that certain kind of authority he knew what kind of authority Jesus had.

Jesus takes this occasion and goes in a very pronounced way from the temple with the physical, temporal healings to eternal and Spiritual truths and says “I haven't seen faith like this in all of Israel. This man not only knows I can heal but he knows that My power is such that all I have to do is say the Word.” Then He takes this occasion to take all of His Jewish listeners back to Abraham in which Jesus had said to Abraham, “In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. There's a banquet day coming (Isaiah 25,

Revelation 19), a marriage feast coming and sons like this man are going to be seated all around it.” You don’t get to that banquet table because you’re Jewish or Gentile. You get to that banquet table because you’re in Him. There will be people around that table that you don’t think belong at that table and there won’t be people at that table that you thought would be because of nationality and race but they will be cast out because they were not in Him. He brings them to the glories of the new heavens and the new earth in which every tribe and nation will be gathered around that table. He takes this occasion to accomplish it. Then Jesus says to the centurion “Go home, he is healed.”

In Acts 11 Peter is going to be called from Joppa over to Caesarea by the Sea because a Roman Centurion sends for him and this centurion pleads with him for the Gospel. Peter gives the Gospel to the centurion and when the centurion believes Peter is probably thinking back to this moment with this centurion and Jesus in Matthew 8. Peter says “Who can stop and say that God is not saving the Gentiles” because when that centurion believed Peter said “The Gospel has gone to the Gentiles.” He is remembering back to this moment when this centurion is converted and Jesus uses this moment to say “Many from the east and the west that you don’t think are in the Kingdom will come to Me because I’m going to go to them and many that you think are in the Kingdom by birth will be cast out into outer darkness, in the lake of fire in utter desolation.” So Jesus told the centurion to go not because he believed. People aren’t healed because of their faith, they are healed by Christ and Christ works through faith. The servant was healed that very hour.

Then we come to a third miracle and that has to do with an apostle’s mother-in-law. This is one of my favorite ones. Matthew 8:14–17 says [14] *And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. [15] He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. [16] That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. [17] This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”* Peter and Andrew are from a nearby town called Bethsaida. They have come over and joined forces with James and John in a large fishing enterprise that they all put together. Peter is married and by the time they get from the mountain to the house after the miracle with the leper and the centurion Jesus notes that Peter’s mother-in-law has a fever which probably indicates something like malaria.

I wonder why Peter hadn’t brought his mother-in-law to Jesus to be healed. What seems to be absent from the text is as Peter’s mother-in-law is healed you don’t hear Peter saying “Praise the Lord!” We won’t go there. Jesus comes and touches his mother-in-law and this woman who has opened up her house that has become the epicenter of God’s work that will spread throughout all the world, is healed by Jesus and she gets up and writes a book. No, she just got up and served Jesus. She rose and she served Him. She went about opening her heart and her home for the Savior. Then Matthew adds a footnote saying Jesus healed a lot more people and notice how sicknesses are separated from demonization. They are not the same. Jesus heals the sicknesses, cast out the demons and then dealt with paralytics, epileptics, lepers etc. The point is that Jesus didn’t heal everybody that was sick but He could heal anybody from anything. Nothing was beyond His power to heal. That is what Jesus does and that’s the summation.

Then Matthew tells us why he picks these three. He is making a point to us. In the first four chapters of the book he gave us ten prophesies of Jesus that were fulfilled in the birth and life of Jesus. Now he gives us another. Do you know why He is doing all this teaching and healing? It is because Isaiah said that was the sign of the Messiah. Jesus did all this to fulfill the prophesy of Isaiah. You can trust the infirmities of your spiritual life to Him and He is showing you by His supernatural power of the temporary. In other words, watch Him handle the temporary and the physical, now it's in evidence that you can entrust to Him that which is eternal and spiritual. He is the Messiah.

I have one takeaway for you that has to do with signs, wonders and miracles. Here are the miracles of Jesus and we'll encounter more in Matthew 8 through 10. Now why are they there? Miracles are supernatural acts of God which are sovereignly implemented, usually through human mediators, to create wonder for the two-fold purpose of establishing a sign and of affirming, strengthening, or creating authentic faith in the Triune God of glory. Miracles are not explained. They are inexplicable by natural law. If someone can explain how something happens it's providential but not miraculous. That's why the centurion said "Just say the word." The centurion is on to something. This Jesus spoke the Word and the heavens and the earth were flung into existence. Therefore He can speak the Word and override the contagion of leprosy and touch him. He can override distance for He doesn't even have to go to them to heal them. All He has to do is say the Word.

His miracles are sovereignly implemented. He says "I will heal him." They are usually through human mediators but not always. Why? It is to create wonder for a two-fold purpose of establishing a sign. That is why the Apostle Paul refers to miracles as signs, wonders, and miracles. Let's reverse it. God does a miracle to create wonder in order to establish a sign. He is telling you something. The miracle is not the end but it's the means to an end. So here is the miracle that creates wonder because He is telling you that He's the Messiah. I'm communicating. I'm gracious. I'm merciful. Nothing is beyond Me. The miraculous is using the power of God in the temporary for all these people had to die from something. This is a temporary, physical miracle to point to what is eternal and spiritual in Christ. That's the purpose of it. That's why in John 11 and 14, John will say "Are you the Messiah?" and Jesus said "If you don't believe the words that I taught you then look at the works that I did." That's why Paul said "I did the signs, wonders and miracles of a true apostle among you."

So these miracles are there for a purpose. They are to create a sign to teach something. In this case it is affirming Christ as Messiah. Then it is used as an instrument. God's miracles are not contingent upon our faith. They are responsive to faith. They affirm faith and strengthen faith and sometimes they create faith. So that is why these three miracles are given to us.

Here is a final thought. Here Jesus does this. He takes the temporal and the physical and sets up the eternal and the spiritual as He talks about the eternal destruction of those who don't believe Him. He talks about the eternal life at the banquet table of eternity who are with Him. Matthew puts these three miracles here because he is telling us something beyond the miracles that creates the wonder that's a sign that says this is Jesus. Jesus is taking this and just like leprosy can be used as an analogy in terms of the spiritual contagion of sin, now this healing becomes an analogy that goes beyond the temporal and the physical into the eternal and the spiritual.

I want you to see these five things. Everybody that was healed physically is the same as those who were healed spiritually. They have to come to Jesus. The leper came to Jesus. The centurion came to Jesus. When people come to Christ for eternal life for the eternal spiritual healing of being right with God for all eternity, these five things all happen. The first one is that there is an unbounded confidence—Jesus can. When these people came to Jesus, they knew He could do it. When you come to Christ as a sinner you know He can convert you. He can save you.

Secondly, there is an unstoppable courage. The leper leaves his isolation to get to Christ. The centurion walks in among the oppressed, whom he is oppressing, to get to Christ. There is a pervasive humility. Lord, if You will... Look at what the leper does, the centurion with great power does, and Peter's mother-in-law. When she is healed she then serves Him in her humility.

If you're reading this today it's not sentimentality or religion, but it's Jesus Christ. Have confidence for He can save you. Grace is greater than sin, in Jesus Christ. Be courageous. Don't let the mockers or blasphemers or those who ridicule you, stop you from fleeing to Christ today. Have that pervasive humility and say "Lord, I'm not worthy for I kneel and bow."

Fourthly, there is a non-negotiated acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God. I understand that we have to work through doctrinal issues like predestination, election and all that but when you get converted there is an automatic surrender to the sovereignty of God. Lord, You can if you will. Now I have some great news for you. You wouldn't be asking Him if He wasn't willing because He has promised "Those who I draw to Myself I lose not one and everyone who seeks Me shall find Me." The reason you are seeking Him is because He sought you and brought you to Himself so I want you to know that you don't negotiate His sovereignty. You surrender to His sovereignty and your coming to Him is the evidence of His sovereign grace that has brought you from death's trap to life's glory.

That means there is a fifth thing. Do you know why you come to Him? Do you know why the leper and centurion could come to Him? It is because Jesus came down from that mountain to them. I'm so glad I don't have a religion that tells you what you have to go do to get to God. I have a God who has come down, not from a mountain but from heaven's throne for you to save you. You can come to Him because He came down to you.

I do have to clean up one thing. I have to tell you my two conflicting emotions. I have stood right where this text has happened. There is a church that is built over Peter's mother-in-law's house and it has a glass floor. Without a doubt, my greatest moment is at the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum as I stand at the place where this historically happened and I go into that church. As I look down that glass floor I see a four sided eight century church built over a four sided first century church. That was the house church that was established at Capernaum, at Peter's mother-in-law's house. I am absolutely convinced of it. It overwhelms me when I think I'm standing where Jesus stood but I'm standing where He showed His power to create wonder that His sign, the Messiah so that people would come to Him, not only from Capernaum but from all over the world. I'm at the epicenter of the Gospel earthquake.

I also have a conflicting emotion because when I look up outside the walls of that church building I see Capernaum in ruins because Jesus said "Woe unto you Capernaum.

You will not be lifted up for if the signs and wonders and miracles that had been done in your presence had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented but you would not. Woe to you.” I see the very place where He was and think of those who did not come to Him for life, even though He presented to them signs, wonders and miracles that affirmed Him.

Our problem is that we have a heart problem. Jesus came to them but while there are these isolated cases, Capernaum would not come to Him, therefore nobody lives in one of the most attractive places in the world. “Woe to you.” There is nothing but life if you will come to Christ. Even in a broken world you will be more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ and He gives you a perfect healing for all eternity. It’s eternal with a new body in a new heavens and a new earth but if you don’t come to Him it’s nothing but ruins. The worst ruin is to be cast into the irrevocable outer darkness apart from Him so come to Him today.

I will share with you that Rabbi prayer I told you about in the beginning. When people think they can save themselves with their religion, inevitably their arrogance will come through in dealing with other people, instead of compassion and humility. Here was a prayer that was uncovered that some Rabbis prayed in the first century. Ladies, don’t get mad at me. I’m just quoting what they would say. They would rise up and say “O Lord, I am glad as I awake this morning that I am not a slave, I am not a Gentile and I am not a woman.” Now you know why Matthew picked these out, there is the castaway (leper), the Gentile (centurion), and the woman (Peter’s mother-in-law). Jesus comes to the cast off and the castaways to bring them to life.

I don’t care where you are today. You’re not too far to be saved by Christ but those who don’t come, to the cast off He has come but if you refuse to come to Him then you’re cast away under His judgment for eternity. Come to Him who came for you. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for this marvelous moment to be with these people and then my extraordinary privilege to say that you may be reading this today and God has drawn you and we are pointing you to the glorious, miraculous, powerful, saving work of Christ. This is not a temporary physical healing but an eternal spiritual healing of being right with God and an entrance into the society of God’s people for all eternity. A banquet table awaits you. Please come to Christ today. May God’s Spirit give you courage and confidence that He can save you and humility to declare that you need a Savior. Then O God would You give us the glorious and wonderful blessing of knowing You save all who come to You because Jesus came for us. I know many have already come to the Savior courageously, confidently and with humility so now may we like Peter’s mother-in-law, you have touched us and saved us so we will rise up and serve You, our Lord, our King, our Champion, for I pray in Jesus’ Name, blessing our great God, Amen.