



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew

Chapter 8

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Introduction

In This Chapter We Will Study:

- The nature and purpose of the miracles performed by Jesus the Healer
- Jesus fulfilling "the law and the prophets" as He promised in Matthew 5:17-18
- The cost of discipleship



An Overview

Matthew chapters 8:1-10:4 contain the second narrative section of the Gospel. This section relates ten miracle stories that take place in or near either the town of Capernaum or by the shores of the Sea of Galilee

Six of them are in this chapter:

1. The cleansing of a leper (8:1-4)
2. The healing of the centurion's servant (8:5-13)
3. The healing of Simon-Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15)
4. The healing of people possessed by demons and the sick in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4 (8:16-17)
5. The calming of the storm at sea (8:23-27)
6. The healing of the Gadarene demoniacs (8:28-34)

Jesus Cleanses a Leper (8:1-4)



- We see in this chapter and the chapter succeeding, a succession of "miracles" not less remarkable than His teaching was; miracles that tended to confirm beyond a doubt the impression made by His sermon that He was sent from God
- Great numbers of those who had been with Him in the mountain, and great numbers of others who were attracted by the fame of that discourse followed Him
- Leprosy was a dreadful, contagious, and hopeless disease
- It begins as a skin disease and is a kind of living death
- The leper, by the law of Moses, was regarded unclean, was separated from the people, and the disease was a type of sin, Leviticus 13:1-12; 2 Kings 5:27; Numbers 5:2

Jesus Cleanses a Leper (8:1-4)



- It was an offence to the Jews to touch a leprous person, and was regarded as making him who did it ceremonially impure, Leviticus 13:3
- The act of Jesus putting forth His hand and touching him, therefore, expressed the intention of Jesus to cure him, and was a pledge that he was, in fact, already cured
- The leper could not enter society until the priests had so declared
- To obey the laws of God, and make proper acknowledgments by an offering
- He must show himself to the priest, and get his testimony to the reality of the cure, as a proof to the people that the healing is genuine

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)



- Capernaum: His return to the place He made His home after the Sermon on the Mount and healing the leper, Luke 7:1-10
- A centurion was the commander of 100 men in the Roman armies
- Judea was a Roman province, and garrisons were kept there to preserve the people in subjection
- This man was probably by birth a pagan, Matthew 8:10
- This centurion did not act as many masters do when their servants are afflicted
- His request was a prayer of faith, and so effectual, and was heard as soon as delivered

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)



- Jesus does not say that He would come and see him
- He would come and heal him at once: and indeed it is a proposal of more than what was asked of Him; His presence was not asked, and yet He offered it
- His answer, which is short and full, not only shows the readiness of Christ to do good, how soon and easily He complied with the centurion's request,; but also contains an absolute promise that He would heal him

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)



- The centurion answered through friends whom he had sent for this purpose (Lk 7:6)
- His humility was partly due to his consciousness that he was a Gentile and also it was his feeling of unworthiness
- Rigid Jews did not hold social association with Gentiles, and the centurion may have supposed that so holy a Jewish teacher as Jesus would hesitate to come under his roof
- Speak only a word is the idea, and *my servant will be healed*
- Not even Martha (Jn 11:21) thought that Jesus could have saved her brother Lazarus without going to him
- His faith was great

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)



- He had full confidence in the ability of Jesus to heal his servant, and requested Him simply to give the command
- This request he presented in a manner appropriate to a soldier
- As if he was saying, “If men obey me, who am an "inferior" officer, subject to another, how much more shall diseases obey You - the original source of power having control over all things!”

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)



- There are two cases in the Lord's history where He is said to have marveled; here and in Mark 6:6
- In one case he marvels at the faith of a Gentile; in the other at the unbelief of the Jews
- The greatness of his faith is shown in his lofty conception of the power and dignity of Christ
- This great faith was found, not in Israel, but in a Gentile
- In one case beside, that of the woman of Canaan (Mt15:28), also a Gentile, the Lord commends the greatness of faith

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)



- Jesus takes occasion from the faith of a Roman centurion to state that this conversion would not be solitary; that many pagans - many from the east and west would be converted to the gospel, and be saved, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were
- The Lord means not only those who are geographically far away from Israel, but those who have been far away spiritually, Gentiles as well as Jews

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)



- The Jews, the natural children of Abraham, the Father of the faithful, heirs of the promises made to him
- Will be cast out because they rejected the Messiah, in whom all the promises center
- This is an image of future punishment
- The centurion believed that Jesus could heal his servant by speaking the word
- And at the moment these words were spoken the servant was well

St. Peter's Mother-in-Law Healed:(14-15)



- This account is contained also in Mark 1:29-31, and Luke 4:38-41
- The miracle was direct and complete
- She that had been sick was so completely restored as to attend to them and minister to them
- The mention of "Peter's wife's mother" proves that St. Peter either then was or had been married



Many Healed in the Evening (8:16-17)

- All that were brought to him He healed
- The sick were diseased in body; the demoniacs were spiritually diseased
- According to Mark 1:21-32 this occurred on the evening of the Sabbath
- The Jews kept the Sabbath from evening to evening, Leviticus 23:32
- On the Sabbath they would not even bring their sick to be healed Luke 13:14; but as soon as it was closed, on the evening of the same day, they came in multitudes to be cured
- The quotation is taken from Isaiah 53:4
- Christ fulfils the prophecies in all respects

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)



- The multitudes had gathered to listen to His teaching, or to behold His miracles
- The sea was only six miles wide, and the Savior often crossed it in order to secure retirement and refuge
- There is no deep recess in the eastern hills; no towns along its banks corresponding to those in the plain of Gennesareth
- One would have thought, that this man, the scribe who came to Jesus desired in good earnest to be a disciple of Christ
- However, from Christ's answer to him, who knew his heart, we may understand his motives

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)



- He, seeing the miracles which Christ wrought, and observing the fame of Him among the people, began to think that he would be generally received as the Messiah; and by joining himself to Him, promised himself much ease, honor, and wealth
- These seem to be the motives, which prevailed upon him to take so sudden and hasty a step; for he did not wait to be called to follow Christ, as the other disciples were, but offers himself to be one; that is, to be one of his intimates, one of his apostles; and besides, he rashly promises to do that, which he knew nothing of, and which in some cases is impossible to be done

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)



- Jesus rejects not this man's offer, nor refuses him the liberty to follow Him, only He will have him know what he is doing and count the cost
- He, as the Son of man, did not possess what the humbler animals claim, a home
- If he follows Him, he must not expect to fare better than He fared
- We have reason to think this scribe went away
- Another was too slow

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)



- There are two views
 - (1) That his father was already dead, and he wished only to attend the funeral and properly observe the last rites. If this view is correct, the Savior meant to teach that the duty to the Lord is higher than any earthly duty, and when one has to yield to the other it must be the lower one
 - (2) A view is also held that the disciple asked that he might be permitted to remain at home until his father's death and burial, and then follow Christ. That is the more probable view. It was the case of loving father or mother more than Me (Mt 10:37)

The Cost of Discipleship (8:18-22)



- Natural death is the separation of the body and soul; spiritual death, the separation of God and the soul: men who live in sin are dead to God
- Leave the spiritually dead to bury their natural dead
- All the common offices of life may be performed by any person; to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of God is granted but to a few, and to these only by an especial call; these should immediately abandon worldly concerns and employments, and give themselves wholly up to the work of the ministry

Wind and Wave Obey Jesus (8:23-27)



- A violent storm; or a "wind" so strong as to endanger their lives
- Jesus was probably weary, and slept calmly and serenely
- He apprehended no danger, and showed to His disciples how calmly one can sleep with a pure conscience, and who feels safe in the hands of God
- Probably, Satan, the prince of the power of the air, who having got the author and all the preachers of the Gospel together in a small vessel, thought by drowning it, he will defeat the purposes of God, and thus will prevent the salvation of a ruined world
- The disciples' language reflects extreme terror

Wind and Wave Obey Jesus (8:23-27)



- When faith fails in temptation, there is the utmost danger of shipwreck
- Lord, increase our faith! is a necessary prayer for all who desire to be saved
- As the agitation of the sea was only the effect of the wind, it was necessary to remove the cause of the disturbance, that the effect might cease
- One word of Christ can change the face of nature; one word can restore calm and peace to the most troubled and miserable soul
- They were astonished
- They never saw a storm so turned at once into a perfect calm

Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (8:28-34)



- Gergesa has been identified on the east shore of Galilee; the steep place and tombs are still seen
- It was a village in the district of the Gadarenes
- The Lord landed here after the storm
- The tombs were caves, natural or artificial, cut in the rock of the hill side, and, hence, suitable for a shelter.

Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (8:28-34)



- Demoniacal possession was not simply bodily or mental disease
- Evil spirits actually took possession of and controlled human beings
- They controlled the actions and organs of speech of their poor victims
- Sin prepared the way for the entrance of the demon
- The demons, like the devil, recognized Him
- “Torment us” These words show that they expected the final triumph of Christ

Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (8:28-34)



- These were in all probability Jewish property, and kept and used in express violation of the law of God
- Send us away seems to express more fully the absolute power Jesus Christ had over them - permission alone was not sufficient; the very power by which they were to go away, must come from Christ Himself!
- Christ permits the demons to do that in the swine which He did not permit them to do in the possessed, on purpose to show us what rage they would exercise on us if left to their liberty and malice
- Perhaps the loss of the swine was a punishment
- Perhaps it was to show that evil works its own destruction

Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (8:28-34)



- They were amazed at the power of Jesus
- Perhaps they feared a further destruction of property; or, more likely they were acquainted with the laws of the Jews, and regarded this as a judgment of heaven for keeping forbidden animals, and for tempting the Jews to violate the commands of God
- There are a great many who prefer their swine before the Savior, and so come short of Christ and salvation by Him
- They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts, and will not suffer His word to have place in them, because He and His word would destroy their lusts



Conclusion

- Before healing the centurion's servant, what impressed Jesus?
- What two lessons did Jesus teach about discipleship?
- What was the law concerning leprosy, and other contagious skin diseases? See Lev 13:1-3,45-46; 14:1-19; Num 5:1-3
- What is the radical change in the Law concerning Jesus and the "unclean"?
- Why does Jesus tell the man to go to the priests?



Conclusion

- What does Jesus mean by saying, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead”?
- What point is He trying to make?
- What do the demons in the two demoniacs ask Christ to do?
- What is the significance of driving the swine into the Sea of Galilee?
- What is the reaction of the people of that region to what has happened?



Conclusion

For Application:

- How are family commitments affecting your willingness to follow Jesus? How likely is it that others who know you would agree with your assessment?
- When have you cried out to God for safety because you were afraid? How did your faith in Jesus calm the fears?
- Did the citizens of Gadara pay more attention to the fate of the demoniacs or of the swine? If God's action causes a change in the direction of your life or that of an acquaintance, on which are you more likely to focus, the change of life or God?