

Demonstrating the Kingdom



Jesus went around doing good and healing
all who were under the power of the devil,
because God was with him | Acts 10:38



Thoughts, Notes and Answers

Acts 10:38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

DEMONSTRATING THE KINGDOM.

This term we return to our study of Matthew’s gospel. You will remember that we left it almost two years ago at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. In that series we saw Jesus “Manifesto” for the Kingdom of Heaven. In these two chapters Jesus demonstrates what that Kingdom, and its King looks like.

Programme

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Sun 14 Apr	11	<i>JESUS AND THE BLIND AND MUTE</i>	9:27-34	36

BOOKS (a longer list.)

- Blomberg, C. Matthew (The New American Commentary) (Nashville, B&H Publishing, 1992)
- Bolt, P. Matthew: A Great Light Dawns (Explore the Bible Today) (Sydney South, Aquila, 2014).
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- France, R.T. Matthew (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (IVP, Leicester, 1985).
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- Osborne, G. R. Matthew (Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010).
- Seccombe, David The King of God’s Kingdom (Cumbria, Paternoster, 2002)
- Wilkins, Michael.J. Matthew (NIV Application Commentary) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004)
- Wright, N.T. Matthew for Everyone: Part 1 Chapters 1-15 (London, SPCK, 2002)

PLEASE NOTE:

It is probably worth my while explaining what I attempt to do in these 'notes'. My first work on them is to ensure that you can actually answer the questions. It is easy to ask questions that no-one is able to interpret. I then attempt to give some thoughts of my own on each question and then to bring to bear materials from my reading on the topic. Sometimes these are direct answers to the questions but, also sometimes, they are extra, I hope, relevant ideas.

It proves impossible in these studies to delve into all of them and I would encourage all people who lead or indeed do the studies to look more widely than the questions and allow Jesus' words to speak to our minds, hearts and lives.

THE SECTIONS OF THE STUDIES

It is good to read the passage for the week at the start of each study. Each of these passages is relatively short so reading them aloud is worthwhile.

THE TEXT

These look at the basic ideas in the passage. I would recommend that each week you do these simply to get the flow of the narrative and its important points.

CONNECTIONS

As the heading suggests, these dig deeper into the themes of the passage or look more widely at Scripture. It is probably among these that you need to make some choices. Of course if you decide to have a go at them all I am sure it will be worthwhile.

IMPACT.

Peter Bolt in his book on Matthew's Gospel suggest that rather than think about how we apply the Scriptures we should ask how they impact us in our daily lives as Jesus' followers.

These Questions seek to get us to think about this.

We need to make the rubber of the 'idea' hit the road of our lives, thoughts and actions. - One of the problems in writing 'application' or 'impact' type questions is not knowing where all the individuals in groups etc. are up to. If you can see a better application of the material - DO IT. - The important thing is to relevantly think about the impact the passage has on us.

Please note that my answers below are not the only 'correct' answers or what you are trying to get to in the study. I have set them out as a guide to my thinking only and an assistance to you.

These Notes are meant to be the start of the assistance I am willing to give in regard to the studies. If you need anything further DO NOT hesitate to contact me.

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DEMONSTRATING THE KINGDOM.

MATTHEW 7:28-9:35

Introduction

In Acts 10 when Peter is speaking to Cornelius, the gentile Roman Centurion, he says of Jesus: *“38 ... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”*

Peter could well have been thinking of the events which take place in these two chapters as he spoke.

The Sermon on the Mount has given us Jesus’ vision of the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God as the other gospels call it) with its lessons on relationships to one another and to Yahweh and to the world around us.

Now Jesus, as the King in the Kingdom, is demonstrating just how this works out. Matthew presents us with nine miracle stories (containing ten actual miracles plus summaries of others).

Here we will see Jesus power over disability, disease, demons and the world of nature and, in that, we are assured of his rule in our world and in our lives.

As we study these 11 small sections of the scripture I trust that you will see Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly*.

Greg Holmes,

February 2019

Matthew 11:2-6 When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

** From St Richard of Chichester (13thC) or ‘Godspell’ depending on your generation.*

Study 1: Matthew 7:28-8:4

JESUS AND THE LEPER

Before You Start

Reflect back on Jesus sermon in Chapters 5-7 and read 7:28-29.

This is simply for revision and setting the scene.

Could be done by looking at the headings in your Bible.

What sort of Kingdom is Jesus proposing?

He calls it the Kingdom of Heaven.

For a catch phrase it could be a Kingdom of Grace and Peace with God the Father.

What effect does his sermon have on the hearers?

They are amazed at the teaching and Jesus' authority.

Listen carefully to Matthew 8:1-4

I have characterized this as listening carefully.

This implies that it will be read aloud.

A member of the group can do this – or you can use a recorded version.

Bolt: *“Matthew’s story thoroughly engages its readers. As we listen, we are caught up in the narrative – drawn in by the drama and drawn in to the drama: spun around and reoriented towards God’s coming kingdom. But this does not mean that the Gospel is primarily about us. On the contrary it is primarily about Jesus.”*

The Text (8:1-4)

Parallels: Mark 1:40-44; Luke 5:12-14.

I have listed the parallel passages in the other Gospels for each of these passages but it is not intended that they necessarily be looked up.

Osborne: *“This first of the series of nine miracle stories adds the sense of Jesus’ powerful deeds to those of his powerful words in chs. 5–7. Also, together with the next miracle it features Jesus’ mission strategy — first to the Jews (vv. 1–4 = 10:5–6; 15:24) and then later to the Gentiles (vv. 5–13 = 28:19). Finally, ... this section provides a bridge from the Sermon on the Mount to the miracle cycle by stressing the statement that Jesus fulfills the law (5:17–20) and Lev 14 in terms of the injunctions on leprosy.”*

1. When does this happen?

Matthew narrates this as happening immediately after Jesus had come down from the mountain. He had gone up the mountain in 5:1

Straight after his Sermon.

The crowds you will not followed Jesus. Blomberg: *“This provides a fitting introduction to the second of the two key concerns of 8:1-9:35: Christology (who is this Jesus?) and discipleship (how do we respond to Him?).”*

Worth noting is this comment from Carson: *“Matthew’s arrangement of the pericopes in chs. 8–9 is demonstrably topical, not chronological. All these pericopes except 8:5–13, 18–22; 9:32–34 are paralleled in Mark, but not in the same order, and these three are paralleled in Luke. Mark 1:40–2:22 appears to provide the basic framework with numerous exceptions. The events in Matthew 8:18–22 originally occurred not only after the Sermon on the Mount but apparently after the “day of parables” (ch. 13; cf. Lk 8:22–56). On the other hand, Matthew 8:2–4; 8:14–17; 9:2–13 almost certainly took place before the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mk 1:29–34, 40–45; Lk 4:38–41). Matthew does not purport to follow anything other than a topical arrangement, and most of his “time” indicators are very loose. This does not mean that Matthew’s arrangement is entirely haphazard but that it is governed by themes. Linkage from pericope to pericope is provided by ideas, catchwords, and dominant motifs”*

2. What does the man ask? What problem does he have? What tone does he use?

This man comes very respectfully.

The tone seems to suggest that he knows Jesus is able to heal but wonders whether Jesus will choose to heal him.

The problem he has is that he is a leper – that is he has the disease that was called leprosy.

Carson: *“Whether NT leprosy was actual leprosy (Hansen’s disease) or a broader category of skin ailments including leprosy is uncertain. But the Jews abhorred it, not only because of the illness itself, but because it rendered the sufferer and all with whom he came in direct contact ceremonially unclean. To be a leper was interpreted as being cursed by God (cf. Nu 12:10, 12; Job 18:13). Healings were rare (cf. Nu 12:10–15; 2Ki 5:9–14) and considered as difficult as raising the dead (2Ki 5:7, 14). In the messianic age there would be no leprosy (cf. 11:5).”*

3. What is Jesus first response? Then what does he do?

Jesus first response is to reach out and, amazingly, touch this leper.

Blomberg: *“Jesus gesture made clear that he was not concerned with others’ taboos and dramatically demonstrated that God’s love extends to even the most outcast of society.”*

Osborne: *“Did Jesus become unclean? Certainly not! In Jesus’ touch it was not uncleanness that was communicated but rather the healing power of the supreme Holy Man (as was believed then). To the healing touch is added the powerful command, “Be healed!” The effect is immediate. ... the word translated here as “healed” (καθαρίζω) means both “cured” and “cleansed” of ceremonial uncleanness.”*

He then tells him he is willing to heal and with a word of command, heals.

4. What does he tell the leper to do?

First he tells him not to tell anyone.

This idea of not telling comes up again at the end of the stories we are looking at.

Wilkins: "A regular aspect of Jesus' ministry was to demand secrecy about his identity and activity, which is especially emphasized in Mark's Gospel, but also in Matthew (cf. 9:30; 12:16; 16:20; 17:9). ... He carefully avoids stirring up in the crowds a misunderstanding of his messianic identity. Although miracles will attest the authenticity of his gospel message about the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus does not want crowds clamoring for the miracles alone. They may easily misunderstand his message to mean that he has come to effect only physical healing or to bring national and military liberation. He will guide his disciples and the crowds to understand that his primary mission is to bring forgiveness of sins (see 9:1–8; 20:28; 26:28), which brings true cleansing."

Osborne: "While in the story Jesus wants to keep his messianic office from the people, Matthew certainly expects his readers to recognize the reality of his messianic authority. This theme was already established in 4:12–25, where Jesus began his preaching and miraculous ministry in Galilee, but here it becomes a major theme after the Sermon when the compendium of miracles is introduced. Jesus is indeed Lord of all, and every aspect of creation follows his command."

Then he reminds him to fulfill the law by going to the priest to be 'certified' as being made clean.

Connections

1. Why does the leper have to go to the priest?

This fulfills the law.

Wilkins: "By commanding the leper to perform the prescribed ritual of presenting himself to the priest (8:4), Jesus fulfills the law required of lepers for reentry into society (Lev. 14:1–32). As Jesus fulfills the Mosaic law, it becomes a "testimony" (martyrion) to the priesthood and to the people of his true messianic identity (Matt. 8:4)."

2. What does Jesus saying, 'I am willing', signify?

Thought the word is not used this signifies Jesus compassion for the man.

He not only can but he will.

For all who ask.

3. What impact will this healing have for the leper?

This restores him back to his full place in the people of God.

He had been excluded – now he is included.

4. What aspect of Jesus' Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

It demonstrates that the powers of sickness and exclusion have been defeated.

What we have in these chapters are what has been called: "Tokens of the Kingdom".

Just as at some events and entertainments you get 'pretend' coins (Tokens) to use instead of real money here are little representations of what, in its fullness, the Kingdom of Heaven (God) will be like.

Impact

1. What would you like Jesus to be willing to do for you? Why, or why not, might he do it?

That's a curly one – who thought to ask that.

For discussion

2. How in this week can you be like Jesus in this story?

We don't have the power of Jesus to do good things for people but we can do some things for those less fortunate than ourselves around us. Sometimes it is just a matter of being truly 'willing'.

Study 2: Matthew 8:5-13

JESUS AND THE CENTURION

Listen Carefully to Matthew 8:5-13

The Text

Parallels: Luke 7:1-10.

Osborne: *"The order here is interesting, for it moves from a Jewish to a Gentile context. Yet the two have one thing in common — both the leper and the Gentile were removed from respected Jewish society; both were outcasts. This affirms Jesus' concern for the marginalized but goes one step further in that it is proleptic of 28:19, in which the mission of the church is to encompass both Jew and Gentile. Jesus at the outset exemplifies his salvation-historical shift from Jew to Gentile. From now on it will be "faith," not ancestral pedigree, that determines God's people."*

1. Who comes to Jesus? What is his request?

A Centurion comes to Jesus.

Wilkins: "Jesus encounters a centurion, a Roman military officer. The centuria (century), a group of a hundred soldiers, was the smallest unit of the Roman legion. Each one was commanded by a centurion, the principal professional officer in the armies of ancient Rome. Although there was little tangible evidence of a centuria being stationed in Galilee until A.D. 44 recent excavations reveal that a military garrison at Capernaum had its quarters to the east of the Jewish village. These excavations shed fuller light on the centurion of Capernaum. He must have been an able and responsible official, who maintained good relations with the Jewish populace."

This centurion wants one of his servants to be healed.

Osborne: "For this man to approach Jesus would be unusual because of the contempt both sides showed the other.⁸ From Luke 7:3–5 we know he was a God-fearer who had helped build (so was a patron of) a synagogue. His "begging" (another circumstantial participle, see vv. 2–3) is also unusual, for normally centurions gave orders. This shows his desperate state as well as his basic recognition of Jesus' greater authority"

2. What is Jesus response? How does the Centurion "push back"?

Jesus says "I will go and heal him."

The Centurion humbly says that he is not worthy of the visit but that he know that if Jesus says the word the servant will be healed.

Blomberg: "These verses disclose an astonishing attitude for and authoritative commander the military forces."

3. What happens then?

First Jesus lavishly commends the Centurion's faith.

Note re faith in these chapters.

Then he gives the word and the servant is healed.

Blomberg: "Jesus, under God's authority, gives orders for illnesses to be cured instantaneously. 'Authority' is obviously the key term again in these verses."

4. What does Jesus say about the Centurion?

Well it is there in verse 10.

He has great faith.

And that he is part of the calling of all people – not just the descendants of Abraham – to be part of His Kingdom.

Wilkins: "The centurion understands that in Jesus is the hoped-for Deliverer, whom Israel as a nation should have recognized. Hence, Jesus' statement both singles out the centurion for exemplary faith and censures Israel for its lack of faith. Jesus' praise and indictment turn to language of promise to Gentiles and judgment against Israel"

Connections

1. Why is the fact that this man is a Centurion significant?

This man is almost certainly a gentile – a significant member of the occupying Roman forces.

Thus he is not a member of the nation of Israel and

He is, in the eyes of many Jews, and enemy of the state.

2. How does Jesus response to this man demonstrate how this is part of God's 'perfect finished plan'?

If you look back at Genesis 12:1-3 you see that God's plan always was to bless all nations.

Jesus words in verse 11 simply reflect this.

3. What warning to the onlookers is there in Jesus' words?

In v12 Jesus is warning the Jews standing around that if they reject Him they may well find themselves on the outer.

Wilkins: "The centurion understands that in Jesus is the hoped-for Deliverer, whom Israel as a nation should have recognized. Hence, Jesus' statement both singles out the centurion for exemplary faith and censures Israel for its lack of faith. Jesus' praise and indictment turn to language of promise to Gentiles and judgment against Israel"

4. What aspect of Jesus' Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

That it is for all nations, all peoples, all those who demonstrate such faith.

*Carson: "Both here and in the story of the Canaanite woman (15:21–28), faith triumphs over the obstacle Jesus erects. ... The centurion's reply opens with "Lord," implying tenacity and deference (cf. v. 6; 7:21–23). As John the Baptist felt unworthy to baptize Jesus, so this centurion felt unworthy to entertain him in his home. The feeling of unworthiness did not arise from an awareness that the centurion might render Jesus ceremonially defiled; race had nothing to do with it. Hikanos ("sufficient," "worthy,") here as elsewhere (3:11; 1Co 15:9; 2Co 2:16) reveals the man's sense of unworthiness (NIV, "do not deserve") in the face of Jesus' authority. "Here was one who was in the state described in the first clauses of the 'Beatitudes,' and to whom came the promise of the second clauses; because Christ is the connecting link between the two" (Edersheim, *Life and Times*, 1:549; emphasis his)."*

Impact

1. How can we have faith like the centurion?

First remember faith itself is a gift from God.

Discuss.

Osborne: "Faith does not control God's healing presence but allows the individual to experience it in a special way. It is mistaken to take the "just as" (ὡς) of v. 13 as meaning the man's faith was the causative agent in the healing of his slave. But it does mean that Jesus honored the man's faith. Our

faith does not bring about the miracle but does channel the presence of God into a situation."

2. What meaning do Jesus words in v11,12 have for us today?

Basically be careful.

Note that by 9:34 the 'spiritual elite' of Israel will accuse Jesus of being in league with the Devil.

Study 3: Matthew 8:14-17

JESUS AND THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

Listen Carefully to Matthew 8:14-17

The Text

Parallels: Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41.

Osborne: *"This is the third healing miracle in which Jesus centers on social outcasts (here a woman), and now it is one of his own followers, Peter's mother-in-law. This is the shortest story and is followed by a summary episode demonstrating Jesus' growing fame as well as the extent of his power — he cast out demons as well. With this is found another of Matthew's fulfillment passages (v. 17) to show that his healing authority is messianic in nature."*

1. Where does this take place?

In Capernaum (v5) at Peter's house.

Wilkins: *"The scene takes place in Peter's house in Capernaum. Peter and Andrew have apparently moved the family fishing business from their hometown in Bethsaida (John 1:44) to Capernaum and established a home there. Jesus enters Peter's house. This may surprise the reader because of the earlier response of Peter and Andrew to Jesus' call, "At once they left their nets and followed him" (4:20). Obviously following Jesus did not necessitate Peter to abandon his home or his family members (though see 19:27). Peter's call to become a fisher of men meant to follow Jesus' will for his life, but it did not mean to compromise his familial responsibilities or to assume an ascetic lifestyle in which he gave up all material possessions."*

2. Who is healed first?

Peter's Mother-in-Law.

She has a fever (it was considered a disease not a symptom — some commentators suggest Malaria). Jesus touches her and the fever goes away. (There has to be a mother-in law joke in here somewhere but I can't think of one.)

3. What happens in the evening?

One assumption is that this is a Sabbath and so people only are out and about in the evening. The people bring their sick and demon possessed to Jesus and he heals ALL.

4. What types of things did Jesus deal with?

In this 'summary' type verse we have Jesus dealing with physical ailment and with demon possession.

Connections

1. Is there any significance, do you think, in Peter's mother in law's reaction to her healing?

We note that she is touched and healed by Jesus and then she sets about to serve them. The right response to Jesus' gracious dealings with us is to serve him by obeying his commands.

Blomberg: *"Her action need imply nothing more than proper etiquette as a hostess. But the verb 'diakoneo' regularly came to refer to Christian service, and the distinctive him may suggest that the woman was beginning a life of discipleship at this point."*

2. Look up Isaiah 53:4. Why does Matthew include this comment and quote in his account?

In the NIV this verse reads:

*Isaiah 53:4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.*

It is important to note the context here. For Matthew's readers the context of the Servant who takes on himself the punishment for our sins would also have been significant.

Osborne: *"At the same time, there is likely another nuance, seen in Dodd's observation that an isolated quote often implies the OT context as well.*

Matthew uses Isa 53 often (20:28; 26:28; 27:12, 57) and likely intends a further nuance here, in which the healing of physical illnesses is a harbinger of the greater healing of spiritual illnesses at the cross. "The healings anticipate the passion in that they begin to roll back the effects of the sins for which Jesus came to die."

Wilkins: *"While this does not yet explicitly introduce Jesus' vicarious suffering and death for sin, it certainly prepares the way for it. 15 Jesus came to save his people from their sins (1:21), and his healings point beyond themselves to the cross and his initiation of the new covenant in his blood, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sin (26:27-28). All sickness and death is ultimately rooted in the entrance of sin to human existence, so Jesus' entire ministry in his inauguration of the kingdom of heaven begins to reverse the cycle of death and suffering."*

3. Look at Matthew 4:13; 8:5; 11:23; 17:24. Discuss the significance of Capernaum

Capernaum

Matthew 4:13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—

Matthew 8:5 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help.

Matthew 11:23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

Matthew 17:24 After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

In many ways Capernaum is simply another Jewish town. But a fair proportion of the action in the Gospels takes place in or near this city.

Wilkins (and I couldn't leave this out) *"Interestingly, in 1968 excavations were undertaken on a site that traditionally was said to be the actual home of Peter. Sifting down through the remains of centuries-old churches, excavators came to what was originally a house, built in approximately 63 B.C. All of the historical and archaeological evidence has led the majority of scholars to the conclusion that the site actually was the original home of Peter in Capernaum during Jesus' ministry. The excavation of a nearby synagogue is consistent with Mark and Luke's narratives, which imply that the synagogue was near Peter's home. The lowest level of this latter excavation is a black basalt first-century synagogue, probably the synagogue in which Jesus preached, just a few steps from Peter's home."*

WOW

4. What aspect of Jesus' Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

Again we see that Jesus' rule works over all sickness and encourages service and worship.

Impact

1. What example does Peter's mother-in-law provide for us in responding to all that Jesus has done for us?

As mentioned above she (it is pity we are not told her name) reacts immediately by 'waiting on them'.

Relationship to Jesus involves serving him.

2. Should we expect God to heal all our sicknesses this side of eternity?

For discussion.

But always remember: Osborne: *“As Hagner says, “Disease is not the true enemy to be overcome: that enemy is sin, for the fallen world produced by sin lies ultimately behind the suffering and sickness of this age.” So Jesus’ miracles are symbols of the greater victory to be won by the suffering Servant on the cross. They are also proleptic of the final removal of both sin and disease at the end of the age.”*

Study 4: Matthew 8:18-22

JESUS AND THE ‘DISCIPLES’

Listen Carefully to Matthew 8:18-22

The Text

Parallels: Luke 9:57-60.

Osborne: *“Matthew inserts these discipleship stories into his nexus of miracles to teach that faith in Jesus must always be united with obedience.” The second theme of the larger section of chapters 8 and 9 (after the lordly authority of Jesus) is the call for radical discipleship. We have already seen the basis of such in the radical faith of the leper and the centurion in the first two miracles of this section. Here two other would-be disciples come to Jesus and want to go the second step after faith, becoming followers.”*

1. Where does Jesus travel? Why make this move?

He now travels across the lake. It would seem that the crowds are becoming too difficult to manage.

He may simply be escaping in order to get some physical rest.

Wilkins: *“We may be surprised by Jesus’ actions after these healings, for when he sees the crowds, he goes away from them (see 5:1 for a similar note). Here Jesus sees the crowd and departs to be with his disciples (8:18). This is a consistent contrast in Matthew. The crowd is the object of Jesus’ ministry of proclaiming the gospel and healing, inviting them into the kingdom of heaven to become his disciples. The disciples are those who have responded, and Jesus gives them specialized teaching that enables them to live kingdom life and serve others.”*

2. What two men approach Jesus now?

First, a teacher of the law (sometimes called ‘scribes). He pledges to follow Jesus.

Blomberg: *“The man addresses Jesus as ‘teacher’ (didaskale), a title given in Matthew only to those who do not fully believe in him (cf. 12:38; 19:16; 22:16,24,36). The title is accurate but not adequate.”*

Second a disciple implies he will follow - assuming he has heard the first man.

3. What pledge or excuse do they offer?

The first man pledges to follow – possibly a little too eagerly

The second man has another priority.

Blomberg: *This “may well have been an idiom for let me wait until my father is dead. The man perhaps fears his family will object. At any rate other priorities come before discipleship.”*

4. What is Jesus’ response?

To the first man Jesus points out that he has no place to call home.

Osborne: *“To the man’s “wherever you go” Jesus adds, “OK, will you go this far?” Jesus does not want shallow commitments but demands that the one who truly “follows” him count the cost (cf. Luke 14:25–35) and make a radical commitment.”*

Wilkins: *“So the expression “no place to lay his head” does not indicate a homeless, Cynic-type philosopher but rather that his ministry will not result in an institutional establishment with comfortable benefits, and this will also be the lot of those who follow him.”*

Blomberg: *“At a deeper level Jesus’ disciples must recognize that no location on earth affords a true home. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), and life on earth is lived as ‘strangers’ (sojourners, exiles) in the world’ (1 Peter 1:1)”*

To the second he makes a call to follow him as a first priority.

Carson: *“If the scribe was too quick in promising, this “disciple” was too slow in performing (v. 21).”*

Connections

1. What is the significance of the phrase - “The Son of Man has no place to lay his head”

The first thing to look at is this phrase ‘The Son of Man’.

Jesus uses this to speak of himself – but it does carry considerable ‘baggage’ with it.

First it is generally accepted that Jesus is referring to himself as the figure in Daniel 7:13-14.

Blomberg: *“Thus the term actually focuses on the exaltation and preexistence of Jesus, who was present in God’s heavenly throne room and given everlasting authority over all the the world. In general “Son of Man” focuses more on Christ’s divinity than on his humanity.”*

Wilkins: *Son of Man “was for Jesus a convenient vehicle to convey his messianic identity. It did not have popular associations attached to it,*

such as were attached to titles like “Messiah,” “Son of David,” or even “Son of God.” Instead, he could teach the true meaning of his identity by referring to himself as “the Son of Man,” which is indeed Jesus’ favorite self-designation. With a general threefold progression, Jesus uses the expression to clarify who he is and what his ministry is.

1. The Son of Man is the humble Servant who has come to forgive the sins of common sinners in his earthly ministry (8:20; 9:6; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40).

2. The Son of Man is the suffering Servant, whose atoning death and resurrection will redeem his people (16:13, 27–28; 17:9, 12, 22; 20:18, 28; 26:2, 24, 45).

3. The Son of Man is the glorious King and Judge who will return to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth (10:23; 13:37, 41; 19:28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:64).”

If you wish to take this topic further Carson in his commentary has an exhaustive(ing) survey of the topic. I can send it to you if you ask.

Second ‘no place to lay his head’ speaks of Jesus’ homelessness – a deliberate choice he has made.

He is a wandering rabbi (teacher). See also the quote above.

2. What does Jesus mean by “let the dead bury their own dead”?

Obviously this is not literal.

If the idea of waiting for the father to die is correct Jesus may be alluding to the spiritually dead.

Wilkins: “This calls for wise thinking. Jesus’ disciples must be guided by God’s mandate to honor their parents, but the supremacy of Jesus as their Master must always be heeded. This was a typical struggle in that culture, trying to balance responsibility to family with commitment to God, because on several occasions Jesus challenges the crowd and even his own disciples not to have any family commitment take priority over commitment to him (10:37–39; Luke 14:25–26).”

Osborne: Suggest that the these two options suit this phrase best: “Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead.” Or “It is meant to be harsh like 10:37 and means even the greatest obligation dare not deter one from following Jesus.”

3. Note the extra person in the somewhat parallel account (Luke 9:57-62). What does this offer and response add to the meaning of this passage?

Luke says: 9:61-62 Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family.”

Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

Again it is about priorities

4. What do you think “follow” means in these people’s minds?

For discussion.

Jesus’ movement is gaining momentum – do these people just want to be in on the ‘latest thing’.

5. What aspect of Jesus’ Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

That absolute loyalty and commitment are required.

Impact

1. Are you prepared to give up your ‘nest’ in order to follow Jesus? Or indeed give up family ties?

For Discussion.

2. What priority does Jesus demand?

For Discussion.

Carson (When Jesus Confronts the World): *“Little has done more to harm the witness of the Christian church than the practice of filling its ranks with every volunteer who is will to make a little profession, talk fluently of experience, but display little of perseverance.”*

Osborne: *“Discipleship is not a casual thing, like joining a club or a sports team; it cannot be an occasional activity, one of many to which we give a bit of allegiance. To follow Jesus is costly, demanding the surrender of other allegiances and the absolute priority of Jesus in our lives. As Jesus makes clear to the two who would follow him, the kingdom has now come, and to become citizens of that kingdom means to renounce other citizenships, to become “foreigners and strangers” (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 1:1, 17; 2:11) to this world.”*

Study 5: Matthew 8:23-27

JESUS AND THE STORM

Listen Carefully to Matthew 8:23-27.

Blomberg: *“The three miracles in 8:23-9:8 illustrate Jesus’ power over disaster, demons, and disease.”*

Wilkins: *“The first skirmish between Jesus and Satan resulted in Jesus’ victory over the temptations (4:1–11). He continues to invade and overpower three of Satan’s primary strongholds: the realm of nature as he calms the storm (8:23–27), the sphere of the spirit world as he exorcises the demoniacs (8:28–34), and the domain of disease and sin as he heals a paralytic (9:1–8).”*

The Text

Parallels: Mark 4:36-41; Luke 8:22-25.

Osborne: *“There are two emphases here, as this continues the discipleship emphasis of the previous pericope and also reintroduces the authority theme of the first set of miracles (8:1–17). This is Jesus’ first nature miracle and begins a topical series containing his three major types of miracles — nature, exorcism, and healing.”*

1. How is Jesus travelling now?

He now gets into the boat to cross the lake (Galilee).

Wilkins: *“Traversing the Sea of Galilee by night was a common experience for fishermen, who used trammel nets throughout the night.³³ Many boats needed a crew of at least five to handle the boat (four rowers and one rudderman), though it could carry as many as sixteen. There was enough room for a person to lie down in the stern and sleep when not on duty, with perhaps a ballast sandbag for a pillow (cf. Mark 4:38).”*

2. What happens?

A sudden and violent storm arises.

Blomberg: *“Matthew, however, calls the storm a seismos (literally, earthquake), a term used for apocalyptic upheavals (cf. 24:7; 27:54; 28:2), often with preternatural overtones. This seem to be no ordinary storm but one in which Satan is attacking.”*

3. What is the Disciple’s reaction?

They are afraid.

Remember a good number of these men are experienced Lake Galilee fishermen – they have seen storms before.

So this one must have been a doozy.

They turn to Jesus ...

Who is asleep.

4. What is Jesus response and then action?

Jesus rebukes their lack of faith.

“He does not chide them for disturbing him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears” (Matthew Henry).

Osborne: *“Matthew uses “you of so little faith” (ὀλιγόπιστοι) often (6:30; 14:31; 16:8) to describe the inadequate God-centeredness of the disciples. It is always the result of a basic self-interest and an earth-centered perspective, thus producing fear. It must be remembered that they cry out to Jesus for help and so at the deepest level do have a basic trust, but they also feel they are about to perish, and so it is terror rather than faith that drives them.”*

He gets up a ‘rebukes’ the waves.

Immediately it is completely calm.

Blomberg: *“The ‘rebuke’ of the elements employs the same term (epitimaō) used elsewhere in exorcism stories (Mark 1:25; 9:25; Luke 4:41) Jesus demonstrates power over the destructive forces of nature, which remain under the devil’s sway. As with his healings, Jesus’ ‘cure’ takes place immediately.”*

5. What is the ‘men’s’ reaction?

Not for the first time they are amazed.

Their question is revealing ‘What kind of man is this?’ And that is the Christological question of these two chapters.

Connections

1. Note Psalm 107:23-32. How does Jesus’ action reflect this? What does this say about who Jesus is? And about our reaction to Him?

Psalm 107 reflects on God’s power over all sorts of different situations people find themselves in. In these verses God is the one who controls the sea.

The implication is obvious.

Carson: *“Those among Jesus’ contemporaries who really knew the OT would remember that in it God is presented as the one who controls and stills the seas (cf. Job 38:8–11; Pss 29:3–4, 10–11; 65:5–7; 89:9; 107:23–32).”*

2. Note the other Galilee incidents (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 4:36-41; Luke 8:22-25; John 6:16-21) what do these add to our understanding of Jesus?

These are worth reading out.

In each Jesus shows his mastery over the elements.

3. What aspect of Jesus’ Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

This is the Lord of all Creation, the one who made the wind and the waves exercising his sustaining power over the elements.

Impact

1. Craig Blomberg writes, “One who has this kind of power can be no less than God himself, worthy of worship, irrespective of when and how he chooses to use that power in our lives. Sometimes he leaves storms unstilled for good and godly ends (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-8).” Discuss.

For discussion?

2. What does Jesus power over this storm say to us about any fear we may have for our environmental circumstances?

We need always to remember that we are not the ones in control of the natural elements around us.

God Rules!!!

Wilkins: Jesus *“is far more than what we have often understood as well. It is a challenge for all of us to look clearly at Jesus as the divine-human Messiah, to allow him to amaze us, and even beyond amazement, to move us to follow him as his true disciples. We would do well to humble ourselves and call on him at our time of need, as self-sufficient as we might think we are.”*

Study 6: Matthew 8:28-34

JESUS AND THE DEMONIACS

Listen Carefully to Matthew 8:28-34.

The Text

Parallels: Mark 5:1-17; Luke 8:26-37.

Osborne: *“This middle of the three miracles for this section of Matthew involves the second type of miracle, an exorcism, and again demonstrates the authority of Jesus. The one who rebukes the storm also rebukes the evil forces. He is Lord of all, and the demons have no power over him.”*

1. Where does the boat take Jesus and his disciples?

To the region of the Gadarenes.

Wilkins: *“Jesus is now in the predominantly Gentile region of the Decapolis, which explains why pigs are being raised, an animal unclean to Jews (Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8). “Gadarenes” refers to both the village of Gadara, located about five miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee, as well as to the surrounding region, which probably included the little village of Gerasa (modern Khersa or Kursi), which lay on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and is the traditional site of the exorcism.”*

2. Who lived there?

This is gentile territory.

The particular residents of interest are two violent demon-possessed men. They have created a no-go zone around where they live.

Bolt: *“Here among the Gentile Gadarenes, it was not surprising to find these demonized men. In a sense they epitomize the problem of the Gentile world: under the shadow of death, afflicted by evil powers. What could the Messiah’s light achieve for those dwelling in such darkness.”*

3. How do they address Jesus?

Significantly they call him ‘Son of God’.

There is a spiritual insight here (not necessarily in a good way).

They also speak of an 'appointed time'. – Blomberg: *"To the demons his arrival seems premature; Judgment Day has not come. They overlook the 'already' of the 'already-not yet' equation. The end times were breaking into human history with Jesus' exorcisms, demonstrating the inauguration of God's kingdom (cf. 12:28), even if he still granted the demons limited freedom for a time."*

They also beg to go into a herd of pigs.

4. What does Jesus say and do in response to the men's predicament?

He says to the demons 'Go!' and they do go.

Osborne: *"Go!" (καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ὑπάγετε). Jesus speaks for the first and only time in this story. It was normal for exorcists to prattle on and on, finding out the name of the demon and its territory of operation, and using various incantations to try to get it to leave. Jesus' great authority is forcefully presented, for he needs only one word, "Go" or "Be gone", and the demons must instantly obey."*

They go into the pigs who rush into the water and drown.

5. What is the result for Jesus ministry?

The result is that Jesus is asked to leave.

Carson: *"This ending of the pericope bears significantly on its total meaning. If the story shows once more that Jesus' ministry was not restricted to the Jews but foreshadowed the mission to the Gentiles, it likewise shows that opposition to Jesus is not exclusively Jewish. To this extent it ... that opponents in Matthew are not selected on the basis of race but according to their response to Jesus."*

Connections

1. Why the 'process' with this account of Demon possession?

In many of the other exorcism accounts Jesus simply casts them out. Perhaps there is something in their reference to an appointed time.

2. Why do the pigs get a role?

Much discussion over this.

Blomberg: *"Jesus permits the demons to continue to live, but they may no longer torment these particular men. The destruction of the herd of swine also convinces those men of the decisiveness of their liberation."*

Osborne: *"The SPCA would picket Jesus today, but no one would have faulted him in the ancient world. The choice was the destruction of the men or the pigs, and Jesus allowed the lesser evil. In doing so he proved to everyone the true nature of the demons — both their uncleanness and their destructive character."*

3. What is the significance of the Demon's knowledge of who Jesus is?

They are the first one's in this Gospel to call Jesus the Son of God.

These are spiritual beings with enough knowledge to recognize the Son of God and to be afraid of Him.

"While the men in the boat are doubting what manner of man this is, that even the winds and the sea obey him, the demons come to tell them" (Theophylact, cited in Broadus)."

4. What aspect of Jesus' Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

This demonstrates Jesus absolute power over the spiritual realm. Before Him they are powerless.

Jesus command and their response would have been familiar to the Centurion in 8:5-9

Impact

1. What is 'demon possession' all about? Does it exist now? In our society?

Osborne: *"In C. S. Lewis's The Screwtape Letters, senior demon Screwtape tells his nephew Wormwood that if he gets his human to think he is not there, he can control everything the person does. That is the case with too many Christians. A friend of mine calls this pragmatic atheism; that is, we intellectually believe in Satan but act as if he doesn't exist."*

Spiritual warfare is very real, and anyone from a third-world country will attest to the reality of demon-possession. At the same time, the battle is over. Jesus has conquered Satan once for all on the cross, and his authority to bind Satan is given to his followers (10:1). Yet we can still be "devoured" by Satan (1 Pet 5:8), and our victory is dependent on the degree to which we are centered on Christ."

2. Note the reaction in the region (v34). How do we react to holiness?

This is all a bit much for them.

Osborne: *"It may be that Matthew wants to expose as well the true values of the townspeople: they prefer swine to the Savior. There is a sense in which this is correct, for the story ends with a rejection of Jesus in contrast with the surrounding episodes (8:27; 9:8), where the onlookers are filled with awe. Yet this is implicit rather than explicit; the historical reason is their fear of Jesus (Luke 8:37), and Matthew may be hinting at the rejection that Jesus would be facing more and more. Still, this reaction is caused by the threat that the authority of Jesus poses, and that is the major thrust."*

Wilkins: *"The destruction of the pigs leads the Gentiles of the region to ask Jesus to leave (8:34). This response is a sad commentary on the perversion of their values, for one would think they would rejoice at a victory over Satan's*

demons. But as one commentator states, "all down the ages the world has been refusing Jesus because it prefers the pigs.""

My question assumes that that much power, that much holiness is difficult for people to integrate.

Study 7: Matthew 9:1-8

JESUS AND THE PARALYTIC

Listen Carefully To Matthew 9:1-8

The Text

Parallels: Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26.

Osborne: *"This third of the set of authoritative miracles centers on Jesus' power over not only illness but over sin itself. Matthew greatly abbreviates Mark 2:1–12 and centers on Jesus' authority in contrast to the negative reaction of the leaders. So in the context of chs. 8–9 this continues the emphasis on Jesus' authority, has a small discipleship aspect (the forgiveness of sins), and begins the theme of conflict with the Jewish authorities that will continue through the rest of Matthew's portrayal. In shortening the story and removing many of the vivid details, Matthew has simplified the narrative in order to center on the forgiveness of sins."*

1. Where is Jesus now?

'His own town' – presumably Capernaum again.

They have been back in the boat (the Apostolic Ferry service) again.

Bolt: *"Jesus' mission seems to have proceeded by an interaction between the Servant's two destined mission fields. He went to Israel, then to the Gentiles and now back to Israel again. And as he returned from his excursion among the Gentiles, it seems that the people of Israel were even more receptive to their Messiah than before. The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand and it seemed to be at hand for everyone."*

2. What problem is he presented with?

Some men bring a paralytic friend to him. He is lying on a mat (a sort of stretcher).

Wilkins: *"Jesus has already cured paralysis (Matt. 4:24), so the men have probably heard of Jesus' supernatural healing ability and now bring their companion to him for healing. Jesus sees that they have faith in his ability to heal their companion, and they expect he will do so."*

3. What is His initial response? And how is that responded to?

Jesus first of all speaks to the paralytic telling him that his sins are forgiven. Osborne: *“We cannot know how much faith was involved; at the least, they believed Jesus could heal the man, as he had healed paralytics earlier (4:24). Sickness and sin were closely linked in antiquity. Romans 5:12 tells us that when sin entered the world, death accompanied it, and all sickness is in one sense related to sin (cf. also Lev 26:16; Deut 28:22, 35; 2 Chr 21:15–19). In other words, sin was the generating force for sickness and death. This does not mean individual illnesses are caused by specific sins.”*

Among the gathering throng are some teachers of the law who accuse Jesus of blaspheming.

Wilkins: *“This is the first time that the teachers of the law appear in explicit opposition to Jesus in Galilee. Blasphemy is an act in which a human insults the honor of God. This extends to misusing the name of God, which is cursed or reviled instead of being honored, the penalty for which is death by stoning (Lev. 24:10–23; 1 Kings 21:9–14). The teachers of the law charge Jesus with blasphemy because they believe that he is dishonoring God by taking to himself the prerogative to forgive sins, something only God can do (cf. Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21).”*

4. Then what does Jesus do? With what result?

Jesus first speaks to the ‘teachers of the law’ with the challenging question about which is easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?.

Osborne: *“In reality, of course, forgiving sins is much more difficult than healing the sick, for only God can do it. But from an earthly perspective, it is easier to pronounce forgiveness, the effects of which can neither be seen nor authenticated. So Jesus is speaking from the human perspective of the scribes.”*

He then tells the man to “Get up, take your mat and go home.”

Which he does.

Osborne: *“The obedience of the man is ironic, so simple and yet so profound in its implications. The wording of the response closely matches Jesus’ command, further emphasizing his authority. The man who was so infirm that he had to be carried to Jesus on a stretcher now has the physical strength to walk home without help.”*

Wilkins: *“The evidence of Jesus’ authority is demonstrated as the man gets up and goes home. Not only have the teachers of the law witnessed the miraculous healing and authoritative claim to forgive sins, but the crowds also are witness; “they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men.” This is similar to the crowd’s reaction at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (7:28–29), except now instead of*

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amazement, they are “filled with awe [phobeo],” a word that normally connotes an element of fear.”

Connections

1. Note the parallel passages in Mark 2:3-12 and Luke 5:18-26. What extra information are we given?

This is really one of the great Bible Stories and the extra detail in the other accounts about the crowd and the roof, four friends and the commendation of their faith.

It is interesting that many of these stories in Matthew are abbreviated from the account in Mark.

2. Why does Jesus initial response upset the ‘teachers of the law’ so? What is Jesus verbal response to them?

They are upset because as they say rightly ‘Only God can forgive sins’ (This is in the Luke and Mark accounts).

In responding Jesus again uses the Son of Man title and challenges the teachers of the law with the logic that if he can have the man walk then that proves that he can forgive sins and thus is God.

3. What does His healing of the man also say to the ‘teachers’?

Jesus is saying ‘I AM GOD’ in clear and exemplified terms.

Thus their thoughts are evil.

It is worth noting through these chapters how the subtle opposition to and denigration of Jesus grows through to the final statement in 9:34.

4. What aspect of Jesus’ Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

The Kingdom is not just about the healing of the physical it is more about the healing of the spiritual harm of sin in our lives.

Impact

1. Reflect on the dedication of the paralyzed man’s friends.

Jesus commends their faith in the parallel accounts.

They show dedication, persistence and a willingness to put in the hard yards in order for this man to meet Jesus.

Are we willing to do the same for our friends?

2. “Your sins are forgiven” Jesus says. Are yours? How?

For discussion.

Study 8: Matthew 9:9-13

JESUS AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

Wilkins sums up the last 7 studies and look to the next 4 (and beyond like this: *“The miracle stories and sayings on discipleship in 8:1–9:8 have emphasized the messianic authority of Jesus’ person and mission as he demonstrated the power of the kingdom of heaven. But Jesus’ messianic mission has not unfolded as many expected. He did not cater to the religious or social elite; instead, he healed the marginalized, breaking down purity, ethnic, and gender barriers to the kingdom (8:1–17). He disappointed the discipleship expectations of some who wanted to follow him, indicating that his discipleship was not based on economic well-being or cultural expectations (8:18–22). He demonstrated that the authority of his messianic kingdom has not come with military or political might but with a goal to overpower Satan’s strongholds within nature, the demonic world, disease, and most importantly, sin.*

The unexpectedness of Jesus’ mission now begins to elicit opposition. People do not like to have their worldview rattled or challenged. As Jesus calls unexpected and unappreciated types of people to follow him, he encounters resistance from the religious establishment (9:9–17). As he heals surprising types of people, the crowds react with amazement, but the religious leaders hint that his mission is really not from God but from Satan (9:18–35). Yet this does not deter Jesus. In fact, his compassion for the crowds is in stark contrast to the religious leaders, who have made life even more cruel for the people. So Jesus expands his mission to Israel by sending out others with his authoritative message and power (9:36–38).”

Listen Carefully to Matthew 9:9-13.

Parallels: Mark 2:14-17; Luke 5:27-32.

Osborne: *“As stated in the introduction to this section, Matthew has organized chs. 8–9 with sets of three miracles separated by discipleship sections. The first discipleship segment centered on the radical demands of Jesus (8:18–22). This one centers on the reality and meaning of that new kingdom presence. (1) It means a new social paradigm, as Jesus has come not for the elite or the superficially pious but for the true sinners, the downtrodden, and the despised (9:9–13). The forgiveness of sins in the previous pericope (9:1–8) now leads to Jesus’ ministry to sinners. Here Jesus goes beyond just reaching out to these despised people. He invites one of them to join his apostolic band!*

(2) It means many spiritual disciplines, such as fasting, are temporarily suspended for joy that the kingdom has arrived (9:14–17).

(3) Blomberg brings out a further nuance. In 8:18–22 Matthew centered on inadequate responses to Jesus’ call; here he highlights the proper response in light of strong criticism from the leaders and even from the disciples of the Baptist.”

The Text

1. What happens first in this passage? Why is it significant?

Jesus, presumably still in Capernaum, goes to everyone's favorite place, the tax office, and calls the tax collector to follow him. The tax collector, Matthew, does so, immediately.

This is significant, first, because Matthew is one of the dreaded and hated tax collectors who work on behalf of the occupying Romans.

Wilkins: "Taxes in ancient Rome were collected by the highest bidders for a collection contract, but in Palestine tax collectors were employed as representatives of the Roman governing authorities, collecting the prescribed duties and generally seeing to public order. They usually came from the native population, so that they knew the local people and local customs. They were required to collect a certain amount of tax money for the Roman authorities, and whatever extra they collected constituted their own commission. A tendency to excessive extortion made them despised and hated by their own people (cf. Luke 19:8), and they became proverbial of a person with a self-seeking outlook (Matt. 5:46). Matthew's tax booth probably stood at some place where the Via Maris passed close by the lakeshore on the outskirts of Capernaum.¹ He may have collected tolls from the commercial traffic traveling through this area or taxes for the fish caught on the Sea of Galilee, for both of which Herod Antipas was responsible. The expected tax revenue was a heavy toll to extract from the people of Galilee, who already had a hard life. So Matthew is likely not well respected in the region. In fact, the population probably considers him a traitor, selling out his own people to Roman occupation and rule."

Second, because this is Matthew the apostle, the writer of this Gospel. In the other Gospels Matthew is also called Levi (son of Alphaeus) (Mark 2:14) Osborne: *"Matthew probably left more than perhaps any other of the disciples. As a tax collector he would have been fairly wealthy, and while the fishermen in the group kept their boats (John 21:3) and probably went back to their fishing from time to time, Matthew could hardly return to his former occupation. In fact, he likely did not want to do so, for the Jews looked on tax collectors both as collaborators with the Romans and as unclean because of their graft and because they continually handled pagan coins and came into contact with Gentiles."*

2. Note the events at the 'dinner party'. Who was there? What is the reaction?

Well it seems that Jesus also follows Matthew to his house where there was quite a crowd of guests (it could rightly be called a banquet). They are characterized as tax collectors (Matthew's colleagues) and 'sinners' (possible the only class of people who would associate with the tax collectors).

Some Pharisees are also around and they have 'questions' about the company Jesus keeps.

3. Who do the Pharisees 'have a go' at?

The Pharisees go to the disciples.

Perhaps they could not get through the throng at the table to address Jesus directly.

Or perhaps they simply seek to undermine this radical Rabbi's support.

4. What is Jesus' response?

Jesus responds with little parable and an OT allusion and a statement of his purpose.

Connections

1. What does Jesus mean by "It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick"?

This is simply a statement of fact – particularly in Jesus time. The idea of preventative medicine was not yet a 'thing'.

He means, of course, that those who see themselves as righteous (healthy) have no need of Jesus message, where as those who see them selves as in need of salvation (the tax collectors and 'sinners') do. And it is this they seek. Of course the Pharisees opinion of their own 'healthiness' is challenged here by Jesus.

Of course the previous passage had made a connection between Jesus' healings (healthiness) and forgiveness of sins. There is the definite suggestion that Jesus' healings point to the greater healing of the deadly disease of sin.

Wilkins: "Jesus must now clarify who he is and what his mission entails by using the metaphor of a doctor: "On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.' " One of the most distinctive features of Jesus' message and ministry is the promise of salvation to "sinners." But in an incisive play on words, Jesus shows the Pharisees that he has a different view of what it means to be a sinner than they do. To the Pharisees, a sinner is a person who has violated the law according to their interpretations. But to Jesus, a sinner is any person who remains opposed to God's will. The Pharisees consider themselves to be righteously healthy before God because they define righteousness by their observance of the law—their "sacrifice." But they are blind to their real sinfulness before God."

2. And what does he mean by "I desire mercy, not sacrifice"? Look up Hosea 6:6. Note the context - does this help us understand what Jesus is saying?

Hosea says 6:6 *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.*

This is one of many references in the prophets to the fact that God does not want the mere ritual but the right attitude of heart. (Micah 6:8 in its context is another)

Osborne: *“Since they call Jesus “teacher” (9:11), he will give them a “learning” assignment! Jesus takes his text from Hos 6:6 (quoted again in 12:7). In Hosea the apostate nation still followed the letter of the law (sacrifice) but had forgotten the heart of the law (mercy and love). Jesus is saying the Pharisees are recapitulating the same terrible error.*

“Mercy” (ἔλεος, first for emphasis) in Hosea translates the Hebrew ḥesed or “steadfast love,” the very thing the Pharisees lack (see Matt 23). They are assiduous in their covenant observance, even making up new “oral laws” so the common people will not inadvertently break the Torah. But they have no feelings of mercy toward the outcasts of society. A major NT ethic is that the way we treat others shows our true relation to God. By failing to have a heart of mercy toward sinners, the Pharisees show they are not right with God.”

3. And then what does he mean by “For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners”?

In many ways this is just a restatement of the doctor, healthy, sick one expressed as Jesus purpose.

Need to remember of course that there are ‘none righteous no not one’ (Romans 3:10-11)

Carson: *“These verses again connect Jesus’ healing ministry with his “healing” of sinners. The sick need a doctor, and Jesus healed them; likewise the sinful need mercy, forgiveness, restoration, and Jesus healed them (v. 13). The Pharisees were not as healthy as they thought (cf. 7:1–5); more important, they did not understand the purpose of Jesus’ mission. Expecting a Messiah who would crush the sinful and support the righteous, they had little place for one who accepted and transformed the sinner and dismissed the “righteous” as hypocrites. Jesus explained his mission in terms reminiscent of 1:21. There is no suggestion here that he went to sinners because they gladly received him; rather, he went to them because they were sinners, just as a doctor goes to the sick because they are sick.”*

4. What aspect of Jesus’ Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

This comes down to the final statement.

Jesus has come to call those who recognize themselves as sinners and worthy of judgment before God not those who think they are good enough.

This is still Jesus’ task.

Impact

1. Are you a 'sinner'? What has Jesus done about it?

Make no mistake – YES you are – Yes I am.

In Jesus through his death on the cross we become forgiven sinners – constantly being forgiven in Jesus because we constantly sin.

2. Blomberg notes: "Jesus' fraternizing with disreputable people remains a scandal in the predominately middle class, suburban, Western, church. Many of us like, the Pharisees, at best ignore the outcasts of our society and at worst continue to discriminate against them." Discuss.

As it says – for discussion.

3. How should we as Christians show mercy?

First look to Jesus example. There are lots of them in these two chapters alone.

Then seek opportunities.

Mercy is undeserved favour.

Osborne: *"Too many of us are Pharisees at heart, hypocrites who talk the talk but do not walk the walk. It is easy to become "churchified," i.e., to perform all the external rituals but fail to have a heart for God and others. The Pharisees loved only their own kind but had no mercy or love for the despised in society. A true biblical church will have a community-wide ministry that shows God's love to all around. This is true for ministry both outside and inside the church.*

For instance, the church of Ephesus in Rev 2:1–7 was a model of orthodoxy but had "forsaken the love [it] had at first," primarily brotherly love (note "do the things you did at first" [v. 5], i.e., good deeds toward each other) but also a love for God that must result in that community love. It is shocking how many believers go through hard times with no one offering a helping hand in the church. In the early church "there were no needy persons among them" (Acts 4:34), for the members did whatever they had to (even selling property or homes!) to meet the financial crisis. Can any church in the West come close to that biblical ideal?"

Study 9: Matthew 9:9-13

JESUS AND THE WINESKINS

Listen Carefully to Matthew 9:14-17

Parallels: Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39.

Osborne: *“We saw the kingdom in action in the previous episode, dealing with the effects of the kingdom in reaching the despised and rejected with the gospel. Now we turn to the meaning of the kingdom and its relationship to the traditions that accompanied the demands of the old ways. It is not only the Pharisees but even the disciples of John the Baptist who question the new reality that Jesus is introducing.”*

The Text

1. Who now approaches Jesus?

John’s (John the Baptist) disciples also have a question – they get to Jesus to ask it. (Weren’t quite so concerned with having contact with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?)

We, I think, are to assume that this too takes place at Matthew’s dinner party. Their question relates to Jesus’ and his disciples’ lifestyle.

2. What 3 parabolic sayings does Jesus use to illustrate his answer?

First, he refers to a wedding.

Second, he refers to clothing repair.

Third, he refers to the storage of wine.

(a party, clobber, and grog – a good Aussie threesome.)

Klyne Snodgrass titles his book on Jesus’ parables “Stories With Intent” reminding us that they all have some sort of ‘sting’ in the tail (tale).

3. How do each of these work?

The wedding illustration simply makes the point that with one of the stars of the celebration present then of course people will rejoice. Weddings are celebrations. Note the reference to the bridegroom being taken away (Osborne: *“All recognize this as a prophecy of his coming death. At that time grief-stricken fasting will be appropriate*). (We look more at this below.)

Blomberg quotes Beare who notes v15 *“makes the highest Christological claim imaginable.”*

The clothing repair and the wineskins ones both make the same point that this new thing, the preaching of the Kingdom, requires new thinking.

Osborne: *“The next two analogies (Luke 5:36 calls them “parables”) expand on Jesus’ point regarding the appearance of the new covenant reality and its incompatibility with the old covenant. Just as the joy of the new covenant cannot cohere with the mourning of the old ways, so the new kingdom as a whole cannot be forced into the old one, lest both be destroyed.”*

Connections

1. What is the single point Jesus is making with these three little illustrations?

That something new and exciting and wonderful is happening here and it is a time for celebration.

(You can imagine John's disciples, if they have understood what Jesus is saying, buying food as they go on their way. Or even tucking into Matthew's dinner fare.)

Osborne" *"Gospel and law are brought together only in Jesus.11 Jesus has not come to amalgamate Judaism with Christianity. New forms are needed. The OT has not been annulled but fulfilled, and this requires the Torah of the Messiah, a new set of ethical norms and gospel practices established by Jesus. The early Palestinian church did not realize the fullness of what Jesus meant and considered themselves the new messianic sect of Judaism. It was not until the Gentile movement had begun that they gradually understood the enormity of this truth."*

2. Where else in the Bible is the bride/bridegroom illustration used? Who is the bride and who is the bridegroom?

The Bride/Bridegroom illustration is used somewhat regularly in the Old Testament.

Basically the Bridegroom is God and the bride his people.

Bolt: *"The contrast between wedding celebrations as a high point of human life, and fasting/mourning is fairly well established by the Old Testament. In particular, the time of exile was a time of great mourning, when the voice of the bridegroom and bride was no longer heard (Jeremiah 7:34; 16:9; 25:10), and the future time of restoration would be a time when their voices would be heard once again (Jeremiah 33:11). Isaiah also used nuptial imagery to picture the coming salvation, by boldly announcing that formerly desolate Jerusalem would be the bride and God himself would be the bridegroom (Isaiah 61:10-62:5)"*

Osborne: *"Weddings were a special time of joy, and the guests were free from other religious duties during the celebration time. The celebrations lasted seven days and were proverbial for intense joy, with wine and food in abundance (see John 2:1–11). In contrast, fasting symbolized mourning for sin to the Jews (see 6:16). In the OT Yahweh is the bridegroom of Israel (Isa 54:5–6; 62:5; Jer 3:14; Hos 2:16–20), while Jesus is the groom of the church at the messianic wedding banquet (Matt 22:2; 25:10–13; Eph 5: 25–27; Rev 19:7–9)."*

3. Why use three illustrations to make the point?

The old African-American preacher once said of giving sermons – First you

tells them what you are going to tell them, then you tells them, then you tells them what you told them.

The point is important; Jesus hammers it home.

4. What aspect of Jesus' Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

That this is something new, strong and exciting.

God is breaking into His world in a new way and His name is Jesus.

Impact

1. In what ways are you stuck with tearing clothes and burst wineskins?

For discussion.

What I mean is do we allow Jesus to speak to us in new ways, to challenge our traditions, our understanding, our lifestyles in such a way that we conform more completely to him and to his word.

Blomberg: "All Christians would do well to reflect on whether their demeanor, lifestyle, and word convey to others, especially the unsaved, this joy of salvation and the lively presence of Jesus, or whether they communicate even unwittingly, a dour, judgmental attitude that is quicker to point out the wrongs of others."

Wilkins: "In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that disciplines such as fasting, prayer, or giving to the needy are worthless unless they express a heart that humbly desires to grow into the Father's likeness (5:48–6:18). Moreover, such practices must be carried out appropriately, not legalistically. Traditions are what humans have designed to apply biblical principles to everyday life, but they are not commands from God. They can be helpful if practiced appropriately, but they can be stifling if they become more important than scriptural revelation itself."

2. What does this say about the way we should listen to Jesus?

Carefully

Don't use your 'old' filters.

Osborne: "In our age of rugged individualism many Christians think nothing of living part of their life Christ's way (often restricted to church attendance) while maintaining a secular lifestyle and set of priorities. ... Christ has set the rules for the Christian life (e.g., in the Sermon on the Mount), and they are not optional. The "new" way of Christ is the only way the kingdom community can live, and in each case "if you know the good you ought to do and don't do it, you sin" (Jas 4:17)."

Study 10: Matthew 8:18-26

JESUS AND THE WOMEN

Listen Carefully to Matthew 9:18-26.

Osborne: *“Matthew’s introductory “while he was telling them this” is used to connect this with Jesus’ teaching on the new kingdom presence. Thus the miracles are part of the new reality and provoke joy. The “ruler” is Jairus, the synagogue ruler of Mark 5:22.”*

The Text

Parallels: Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56.

First untangle the stories by reading 9:20-23,

This happens in the midst of the crowd that is following the initial interaction.

1. What is the problem?

The woman has ‘been subject to bleeding for 12 years’.

Osborne: *“This unfortunate woman has been suffering what was probably vaginal bleeding, a menstrual flow that had not stopped for twelve years. Mark tells us she had spent all the money she had on physicians, with no result. We must understand that it was not just the physical danger from so much loss of blood but also the fact that Lev 15:25–30 said she was ritually unclean for that entire time. In other words, she was a virtual leper who would have had to leave family and village, lest contact with her render everyone unclean. It is impossible for us to imagine the agony of heart and soul this poor woman had been through all that time.”*

She assumes touching Jesus cloak will do the job.

Osborne: *“She reasons that with Jesus as a powerful healing prophet (perhaps Messiah), she did not have to have direct contact. Just a touch would be enough. Healing experienced through touch was not unheard of (Mark 3:10), as was the healing power of the clothing of a holy man (cf. Matt 14:36; Acts 19:12). Most likely the “hem of his robe” refers to the four corners at the bottom of the robe where the “tassels” required by Num 15:38–41; Deut 22:12 were found (they were to remind the people to obey the divine commands).”*

2. How is it solved?

She pushes through the crowd and touches Jesus cloak.

Jesus ‘catches’ her and speaks reminding her that it is her faith that has healed her – through Him – not merely touching his cloak.

Osborne: *“Matthew omits Mark’s extensive narration (5:30–34) about Jesus’ perception that power had gone out and his interaction first with the crowd and then with the woman. The result is even greater stress on Jesus’*

supernatural knowledge and the centrality of the woman's great faith. The "take courage, daughter" (the only place in Matthew Jesus calls a woman "daughter," showing great affection) repeats the statement in 9:2 to the paralyzed man and calms her fears. The use of "healed" (σώζω) for healing in v. 21 and here probably stresses the combined physical and spiritual effects of the healing/salvation experience (the word means spiritual salvation in 1:21; 10:22; 19:25)."

Now read 9:18-19 then 23-26.

3. What is the problem?

The man's (he is named in the parallels – Jairus') daughter has died.

His faith in Jesus tells him that Jesus can do something about it.

Wilkins: *"Jesus has not yet raised anyone from the dead, but Old Testament emissaries of God like Elijah (1 Kings 17:17–24) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:32–37) were known to have done so."*

Jesus is moving towards Jairus' house when the above incident occurs.

4. How is it solved?

Jesus arrives to discover the formal mourning process has begun – He shoos them away with the assurance that the girl is not dead but 'asleep'.

Osborne: *"Jesus ... tells the mourners to leave; they will no longer be needed. As in the case of fasting above, there is no more need for grief but only for joy."*

He goes to the girl, takes her by the hand and she gets up.

She is raised from the dead.

Bolt: *"The Son of Man with authority to forgive sins in his land, the bridegroom bringing the kind of joy found at a wedding to Israel, had even raised the dead to life again."*

Connections

1. From 9:20-23 why does Jesus need to confront the woman?

He needs to disabuse her and the crowd of the idea that the touch of his clothes heals.

And he needs her to re-affirm her faith as in Him.

2. From the other story 9:18-19,23-26 what does Jesus say about death?

He calls it sleep.

Make no mistake the girl is dead. These people saw death often and did not make that mistake. The mourners had been called in.

Osborne: *"She sleeps" (καθεύδει) is a euphemism for death (Acts 13:36; 1 Thess 4:14, 5:10; Eph 5:14), but Jesus uses it metaphorically to say her death is merely temporary, just a short "sleep."*

3. What differing sorts of faith do the woman and the father show?

This is more for discussion.

Blomberg: *“All three Synoptic Gospels make it plain that even if Jesus did accommodate the woman’s superstitious beliefs in some way, he faith alone brought about the conditions that made healing possible.”*

Wilkins: *“Faith itself does not heal; God does. The woman has faith in Jesus’ ability to heal her, which has brought her into this precarious public arena to seek out his healing. The centurion believed that Jesus could heal his servant without being present, and this woman believes that any kind of contact with Jesus, even without him knowing it, will bring healing. So her faith brings her to the place where God can heal her. By making her healing public with his announcement, Jesus removes the public stigma of her physical condition and thus facilitates her reentry into normal social and religious life”*

Carson: *“The synagogue ruler felt Jesus’ touch had special efficacy, but his faith was not as great as that of the centurion, who believed that Jesus could heal by his word (8:5–13). Jesus did not refuse this man but responded to faith, small or great. He “got up” and “went with him””*

4. Why intertwine these stories? (It is not as if Matthew does this anywhere else.)

It is a bit hard (impossible) to actually know.

I just wonder if there is something to learn here about differing kinds and strengths of faith

5. What aspect of Jesus’ Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

Again here it is power over sickness and uncleanness

And then there is power over death itself.

Osborne: *“The Authority of Jesus ... is the primary theme of the whole unit of 8:1–9:34. Yet it reaches a high point here as Jesus progresses from healing a serious illness to raising the dead. Every kind of supernatural miracle has occurred in this section — nature miracle, exorcism, healing miracle, and now the ultimate occurs as a harbinger of the climax that becomes the center point of history, the resurrection of Christ himself. The one who has the power to raise a little girl has the power also to conquer death himself.”*

Impact

1. Faith in Jesus or faith in things?

Is this the contrast here?

Not sure that it is.

But did the woman think it was the ‘magic’ of Jesus cloak that would heal her?
For discussion.

Osborne: *“Faith allows a person to participate in the work of God. Both the woman and the father of the girl are characterized by humility and a total dependence on Christ. It is true that Jesus does not depend on the faith of the participants to work his healing power, but it is faith that turns healing into σωζω, i.e., a salvific experience. God is sovereign over this world, and through faith, namely a God-dependent lifestyle, we experience his sovereignty at the depths of our being.”*

2. What thoughts do you have about death? How does Jesus help?

For discussion.

Study 11: Matthew 9:18-22

JESUS AND THE BLIND AND MUTE

Listen Carefully to Matthew 9:27-34

The Text

Osborne: *“The themes here are similar to the previous miracle stories — the authority of Jesus, the faith of the participants, and the publicity that ensued. The third of these is highlighted because of the reappearance of the “messianic secret” (see 8:4), as the two men are unable to keep quiet after experiencing the healing power of Jesus.*

Most likely the deafness is emphasized more than the demon-possession so that it can stand with the healing of the blind men (9:27–31) and conclude the wondrous display of the authority of Jesus Messiah, Son of David, over all physical impairments. Also, this is a further fulfillment of the messianic prophecy of Isa 35:5–6, “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened ... and the mute tongue shout for joy” (cf. also 11:5), thereby preparing for the list in 11:5, “The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear.” Finally, the contrast in the reactions of the crowds and Pharisees sums up the twin themes of Jesus’ popularity and opposition.”

Again two somewhat different stories.

But not intertwined here.

1. How do the blind men approach Jesus? What does Jesus do?

They call out, persistently asking for mercy.

Jesus asks if they believe he can heal them.

Osborne: *“They believe the messianic promises of Isa 35:5, “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened.” The healing of the blind was viewed as the messianic miracle par excellence, and these two men view Jesus as the Messiah, the heir of David.”*

They say, ‘yes,’ and Jesus touches their eyes and they are healed.

MATTHEW 8-9: DEMONSTRATING THE KINGDOM

He warns them, indeed sternly (the language is very strong), not to let this be known – but it is all over the social-media of the time very quickly.

2. How does the mute man approach Jesus? What does Jesus do?

By contrast the mute man, who is demon possessed is brought to Jesus.

Jesus casts out the demon and the man speaks.

The crowd is amazed.

3. What is the Pharisees response to these events?

“It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

An appalling response.

4. Note verse 35 and Matthew 4:23. What do these verses imply about Matthew chapters 5-9?

Matthew 4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Matthew 9:35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

They create what is called an inclusion – that is they sort of put a bracket on each end of a section that belongs together.

Thus Proclaiming the Kingdom

Demonstrating the Kingdom.

Connections

1. What do the blind men call Jesus? Why is this significant?

They call him ‘Son of David’.

David of course is the prototypical king in Israel’s history.

This is a Messianic title –

Wilkins: “This expression refers to the promise of the messianic deliverer from the line of David whose kingdom will have no end (2 Sam. 7:12–16; cf. Pss. Sol. 17:23). The messianic age promised to bring healing to the blind (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7), which Jesus told John the Baptist was one of the signs that he indeed was the expected Coming One (Matt. 11:2–6). The Old Testament records no healing of blindness, and none of Jesus’ followers is ever recorded to have given sight to the blind. But Jesus’ healing of the blind is one of his most frequent miracles (9:27–31; 12:22–23; 15:30–31; 20:30–34; 21:14–15).”

The Blind Men see much better than the Pharisees at the end of the passage.

Carson: “This is the first time Jesus is called “Son of David,” and there can be no doubt that the blind men were confessing Jesus as Messiah. They may have been physically blind, but they really “saw” better than many others – further

evidence that Jesus came to those who needed a doctor (vv. 12–13). “The use of the Davidic title [cf. 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15; 22:42] in address to Jesus is less extraordinary than some think: in Palestine, in the time of Jesus, there was an intense Messianic expectation” (Hill)

2. Why is there a ‘long’ conversation with the blind men and just action with the mute man?

Well, you can’t have a long conversation with a mute person.

However, Jesus does not often allow demons to speak (the two men in Gadara are an exception).

I am somewhat fascinated by the different ways Jesus deals with people. Some he touches, some he doesn’t, some he questions, some he doesn’t, some he gives instructions to, and some he doesn’t.

3. What is the contrast between the crowd’s reaction and the Pharisees?

Probably could not be greater.

The crowd are amazed. This parallels their amazement at this man’s teaching with authority at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (7:28-29).

The Pharisees condemn him and accuse him of being in league with Satan.

Wilkins: “But if the uniqueness of the miracles is a sign to the crowds of God’s activity in Jesus’ ministry, it also confirms to the religious establishment that God does not work in this way. And if God is not the source of Jesus’ miraculous exorcism powers, it must be “by the prince of demons that he drives out demons” (9:34; cf. 9:3). Without eyes of faith the Pharisees cannot see beyond their parochial experience that God is doing something unique in Israel in the word and work of Jesus. So they gather their opposition to Jesus, both protecting their religious domain and thinking they are protecting the people from Jesus. This is an ominous tone, which tragically sets a trajectory for the cross that will inevitably come.”

4. Note v30b (and 8:4) why does Jesus want things kept quiet?

Interestingly Matthew records this sort of saying in the first and last incident in this group of stories.

Jesus wanted to avoid the overcrowding of people come to ‘see’, the sort of negative reaction in 8:34, and people coming to him for the wrong reason.

Osborne comments on 8:4 *“While in the story Jesus wants to keep his messianic office from the people, Matthew certainly expects his readers to recognize the reality of his messianic authority. This theme was already established in 4:12–25, where Jesus began his preaching and miraculous ministry in Galilee, but here it becomes a major theme after the Sermon when the compendium of miracles is introduced. Jesus is indeed Lord of all, and every aspect of creation follows his command.”*

I like Carson's comment" *"But the men whose faith brought them to Christ for healing did not stay with him to learn obedience. So the news spread like wildfire throughout the region (cf. v. 26)."*

5. What aspect of Jesus' Kingdom does this story demonstrate?

His rule over disability and the hope of the removal all such things in the consummation of the Kingdom.

And a neutral response to His Kingdom is NOT an option.

Impact

1. What great sin is represented by the Pharisees words in v34? How do we avoid such thinking?

They are calling good, evil.

In a similar exchange (Mark 3:20-35) Jesus is much stronger in his condemnation of such sin.

Bolt: *"This is certainly a recognition of Jesus' ability to do amazing, extraordinary things. But to attribute his powers to the underworld runs against the tenor of Matthew's story so far. He came to deliver people from the region and the shadow of death, not into it."*

2. Think back over the demonstrations of the Kingdom we have seen in the last several weeks. How has this impacted your vision of Jesus? How has it impacted the way you serve Him?

For discussion.

Osborne: *"The crowds increasingly hold Jesus in awe, while the leaders increasingly reject and oppose him. It is common to think that "seekers" are neutral, interested yet not ready to make a commitment. This is somewhat true, but we must remember that every service or Christian activity they attend, they leave having rejected Christ again. As such they grow increasingly hardened to the gospel, gradually shifting from a crowdlike attitude to a leaderlike attitude. Neutrality is not an option!"*