

Matthew 8-9 • The Power of the King

Introduction

Whenever studying the Gospels it's important to realize that what comes before and after an event or teaching is usually connected, often expanding on a theme or building upon each other. Matthew provides a series of miracles in these chapters which testify to different aspects of power that could only be wielded by the Messiah. Whereas there have been prophets recorded in the Old Testament through whom God has performed signs and wonders, those performed by the Messiah were to testify to His being the King, the Son of David. It's not only a powerful testimony of Jesus as the true Messiah to the Jews of that day (and even now), but of His authority over all things in both the physical and spiritual realms where our own lives are concerned.

¹When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him.

²And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

³Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

⁵And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, ⁶and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented."

⁷Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

⁸But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

¹⁰Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; ¹²but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ¹³And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment.

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in

[Read v.1-17]

Q: What are the three miracles Jesus performs?

A: Healing a leper, healing a paralytic, and healing a fever.

Q: What kind of power of Christ do these illustrate?

A: Christ's power over physical disease.

Q: Why was leprosy one of the most dreaded diseases of Jesus' day?

A: Because there was no cure for it, and having it meant separation not just from society in general but the temple and all the rituals and worship associated with it.

Observation: *Leviticus 13 describes the test for leprosy which the priests were instructed to employ and reveals how leprosy is a picture of sin:*

- It lies deeper than the skin (v.3)
- It spreads (v.7)
- It defiles (v.44-45)
- It isolates from God and man (v.46)
- It is dealt with by fire (v.52)

The nation of Israel was pictured as being defiled with leprosy (Is. 1:5-6). Leviticus 14 describes the ceremony a healed leper went through when formally declared clean – it also so happens to describe the work of the cross.

Point: *Christ's power to heal leprosy was also a teaching to the Jews of that time that He had power to heal their sin.*

Q: What's the obvious difference between the leper asking for help and the centurion asking for help?

A: The leper was a Jew whereas the centurion is a Gentile.

Q: What might the physical ailment of paralysis represent in this instance?

A: The inability to come into the presence of Jesus.

Q: This is one of two instances in Matthew where Jesus healed a Gentile.

(See Mat. 15:21-28) What is different as to how Christ healed them?

A: He healed them at a distance. This parallels Paul's teaching where the Gentiles are said to initially have been "far off" spiritually speaking.

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:13

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bed with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him.

¹⁶When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: “HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES.”

¹⁸Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea. ¹⁹Then a scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.”

²⁰Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

²¹Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.”

²²But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

²³When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.

²⁵And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing!”

²⁶He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

²⁷The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

Q: What is the nature of Jesus’ stern warning to the Jews as a result of this Gentile’s faith?

A: According to v.10-12, that because of their unbelief, they will lose the kingdom and the Gentiles will receive it instead.

Point: Christ’s power to heal paralysis was also a teaching to the Jews of that time that unbelief would reverse the spiritual paralysis of both Jew and Gentile.

Q: How is a fever dramatically different from either leprosy or paralysis?

A: It’s a milder, much more common ailment.

Q: How might this fit in with Matthew’s explanation that Jesus’ healings in general were a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4?

A: First, it was the fulfillment of God’s Word concerning what the Messiah would do at His First Coming; and second it was a demonstration of the Messiah’s concern for life. The application here isn’t the work of the cross or to address sin, but Christ’s earthly ministry of healing for the sake of life.

Point: Christ’s power to heal even the most common of ailments was also a teaching to Jews of that time that He was the literal fulfillment of the Messiah.

Application: The power of the King over disease was a dual testimony to His true identity as the Messiah and greater spiritual works. Do we seek physical remedies when we may also need, or be in greater need, of spiritual healing?

[Read v.18-27]

Q: This just has to be pointed out – What is obviously different between Jesus and the so-called Christian celebrities of today?

A: Jesus never sought nor “played” to a crowd, but actually left them!

Q: Why might the individual’s responses in v.19-22 indicate why Jesus might not have been impressed with these crowds?

A: These people were not willing to forsake all to follow Christ.

Point: Christ has always been concerned for the greater spiritual needs of each person. Physical healing is temporary if not accompanied by permanent spiritual healing.

Q: What is the power demonstrated by the King in this passage?

A: His power over nature. He has complete control over the environment regardless of how it might appear to us.

Q: What kind of peace is Jesus demonstrating?

A: The peace of knowing we’re in the center of God’s will, going from a “great storm” (v.24) to “perfectly calm” (v.26) because of a great Savior!

Q: Who in this passage never had to fear anything from the storm? Why is this actually not a good thing?

A: Those who turned back from following Christ. It’s not a good thing because they were not walking in concert with God’s will, following where the Messiah leads.

Application: The power of the King over nature is a teaching about our faith and whether it’s focused on circumstance or He who is greater than is with us. Do we sometimes measure our spiritual walk by the circumstances? How is this actually a test of faith?

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²⁸When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. ²⁹And they cried out, saying, “What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” ³⁰Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. ³¹The demons began to entreat Him, saying, “If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.”

³²And He said to them, “Go!” And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.

³³The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. ³⁴And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

¹Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His own city. ²And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven.”

³And some of the scribes said to themselves, “This fellow blasphemes.”

⁴And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, “Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? ⁵Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and walk’? ⁶But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—then He said to the

[Read v.28-34]

Q: There is something very different about these men’s relationship to Christ than those in the previous section. How would you describe it?

A: Jesus first deals with people who are basically coming to Him – both Jew and Gentile, then with people who are claiming to desire Him but in reality rejecting Him. These being demon-possessed men are outright enemies of Christ, representatives of Satan himself.

Observation: *This is a graphic illustration of Ephesians 2:1-3...*

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Ephesians 2:1-3

We see death (the graveyard), satanic possession, the filthiness of the flesh, and a strong display of enmity against God.

Q: What is the power of the King being demonstrated here?

A: His power over Satan.

Q: How do what the demons did to the swine reflect their intentions for the men?

A: Satan is a murderer (Jn. 8:44). If Christ had not intervened, ultimately they would have died both physically and spiritually.

Q: What might be significant about the fact that Christ had to go through a storm to get here?

A: It shows how far Christ will go to save our souls!

Application: *The power of the King over Satan demonstrated how far He would go to bring someone back from the very doorstep of death and spiritual slavery to new life in Him. How far will we go to bring someone the Gospel?*

Observation: *What is the common denominator throughout chapter 8 of how the power of the King actually works? It comes about by His Word (v.8, 16, 26, 32), whether to conquer physical or spiritual obstacles.*

[Read v.9:1-17]

Q: What power is indisputably demonstrated through this miracle?

A: The power over sin.

Q: What did the paralytic first need in order to be healed both physically and spiritually?

A: As with the previous paralytic that was healed, he was unable to come into the presence of Jesus on his own. So what he first needed were believing friends who brought him to Jesus. In reality, Jesus was responding to the faith of the friends, not the faith of the paralytic.

Application: *Have you noticed how often it is demonstrated in the Gospels that all a believer can do is bring someone into Christ’s presence so that they can hear and respond to His voice? The ultimate example is the raising of Lazarus*

paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.”

⁷And he got up and went home. ⁸But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

⁹As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him.

¹⁰Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.

¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”

¹²But when Jesus heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

¹⁴Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”

¹⁵And Jesus said to them, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

¹⁶“But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. ¹⁷Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.”

from the dead where all his friends could do was roll away the stone so that Lazarus could hear and respond to Christ’s voice. How does this speak to you about your role in evangelism? Who should you be bringing into Christ’s presence?

Q: What is apparent about the religious authorities’ response to Jesus’ power over sin in their reaction to Jesus’ visit to Matthew’s house?

A: They obviously rejected the notion that He had power over sin; otherwise they would have welcomed Him going to the very people who needed Him the most.

Q: Were the Pharisees following Old Testament Law by avoiding contact with those deemed to be “tax collector and sinners”?

A: No. Over time they had added their own interpretations of the Law to the point that their own traditions superseded the actual, literal Word of God. In their zeal to be separate from sin, they instead became isolated from sinners and failed to make any effort to contact the lost.

Q: If the Pharisees represent people stuck in religious traditions who miss the true intent and ministry of the Messiah, whom do John the Baptist’s disciples represent?

A: They were expecting the Messiah we now know to be Jesus at His Second Coming, the One to establish His kingdom on earth. They represent those who seem to be ready to skip past the opportunity for salvation and go directly to judgment. The Pharisees’ fasting was rooted in placing men’s traditions over the original Word of God, and the disciples’ fasting was rooted in anticipation of the coming of the King before completely fulfilling the whole Word of God concerning His First Coming. (The biblical typology of the bridegroom is Christ going away to prepare everything before returning to take His bride.)

Q: What are the two pictures Christ presents of Himself?

A: He pictures Himself as a physician to heal sinful hearts (v.12) and a bridegroom to bring joy to people’s lives (v.15) They’re both expressions of His ministry.

Application: *How does this contradict the notion that our task is to open doors and invite people to come to us? What is the model provided by Jesus?*

Q: What is Jesus’ ultimate response to both the Pharisees and John’s disciples?

A: That neither of them were right because He was introducing something new as represented in the parables of the cloth and the new wine.

Point: *You cannot pour the new message of the Gospel into the old container of the Law. To mix law and grace is to cause confusion and destroy both. Both groups were attempting to reconcile the Old and New Covenants according to their own terms which is not only wrong, but always the cause of religious confusion.*

¹⁸While He was saying these things to them, a synagogue official came and bowed down before Him, and said, “My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live.”

¹⁹Jesus got up and began to follow him, and so did His disciples.

²⁰And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; ²¹for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.”

²²But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well.

²³When Jesus came into the official’s house, and saw the flute-players and the crowd in noisy disorder, ²⁴He said, “Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep.” And they began laughing at Him. ²⁵But when the crowd had been sent out, He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶This news spread throughout all that land.

²⁷As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

²⁸When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”

²⁹Then He touched their eyes, saying, “It shall be done to you according to your faith.” ³⁰And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them: “See that no one knows about this!” ³¹But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout all that land.

[Read v.18-26]

Q: What power of the King is obviously demonstrated here?

A: The power over death.

Q: What might be significant about a “synagogue official” coming to Jesus?

A: He’s obviously a religious Jew obedient to the Law, yet he recognized as death approached that his religion was powerless to help. He seemed to recognize Christ’s greater authority.

Q: In this and parallel accounts the woman yearned to literally touch the hem of Jesus’ cloak. Why is that significant?

A: Hems of garments were visible representations of people’s wealth and authority. They were so unique that when a financial transaction was finalized, a person’s hem was pressed in the clay of the tablet supplied as the receipt or document. She wasn’t treating Christ like some kind of good-luck charm, but seeking His greater authority.

Q: What is the spiritual difference between the official, the woman, and the crowd that laughed at Jesus?

A: The woman exhibited immediate faith, the official’s faith was tested by Christ’s delay along the way, and the crowd had no faith.

Q: Who are the three people Christ raised from the dead according to the Gospels?

A: A little girl (here), a young man (Lk. 7:11-16), and an older man, Lazarus (Jn. 11).

Point: *Sin reaches all ages, but though all sinners are dead spiritually, there are different degrees of decay. The girl just died, the young man was dead perhaps a day, and Lazarus had been entombed for four days. The “moral sinner” is like the little girl where there is no decay but there still is death; the “immoral sinner” like Lazarus whose sin begins to smell. All three were raised by the power of His Word.*

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 5:24

[Read v.27-31]

Q: What power of the King is demonstrated here?

A: Power over darkness.

Q: What is very different about the way these men addressed Jesus from all the other people we’ve read about to this point?

A: They’re the very first to address Him as “*Son of David*”, a Hebrew title that no one would use unless they were openly acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah.

Application: *Note how “faith” has played a role throughout these chapters:*

- *The centurion had great faith. (v.8:10)*
- *The disciples in the storm had little faith. (v.8:26)*
- *The faith of his friends helped the paralytic. (v.9:2)*
- *The faith of the woman healed her. (v.9:22)*

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- Jairus' faith was tested by the delay along the road.
- The blind men were healed by faith. (v.9:28)

How do you relate personally to each of these examples? Which more closely mirrors yourself now or from a previous experience? What have you learned about faith from these examples?

[Read v.32-38]

Q: What power of the King is demonstrated in this final example?

A: Power over demons.

Q: What is unique to this final demonstration from all those before it?

A: It's the one miracle where it was admitted that "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel". It was such a powerful testimony to Jesus' being the Messiah that the Pharisees had to openly oppose Jesus from this point on, even calling Him Satan.

Application: The greater lesson behind every miracle performed was the message testifying to Jesus being the Messiah. Each was a test of the heart forcing one to accept or reject Him as Messiah. When we seek miracles or signs, are we seeking them as a testimony to the Messiah or as something pleasing to us personally? Is it possible that the issue of "faith" where Christ is concerned is more important than miracles?

³²As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him. ³³After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." ³⁴But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

³⁵Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. ³⁶Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

Overall Application

There seems to be a natural progression of the powers of the King as He demonstrated them first over the physical domain, but more so over the spiritual:

- Power over disease
- Power over nature
- Power over Satan
- Power over sin
- Power over death
- Power over darkness
- Power over demons

Note how Jesus didn't argue with anyone throughout all these examples, but rather went to help those who would receive Him. He preached "the gospel of the kingdom" (v.35), which means He was still offering Himself to the nation as their King. The multitudes today are still in need of the Shepherd. Only Christ can lead and feed them.

Christ pictured Himself not only as a shepherd but as a harvester, the Lord of the Harvest. Although the harvest is His, He has commanded us to go out in obedience to Him if souls are to be won. The repeated example we're given throughout these chapters is taking the message **TO** the unsaved, not trying to lure them into our comfort zone.