

## Week 10: Matthew 8–9

### Hook



**Main Point:** Jesus heals many people as a glimpse of the future kingdom, where there will be no sickness, death, crying or pain.

In the early 1960s, Johnny Mathis released the first greatest hits album, *Johnny's Greatest Hits*.<sup>i</sup> From the Beatles to the Backstreet Boys, this concept caught fire with many musicians toward the end of their career due to the album's ability to expose new listeners to artists' best moments in their career. Further, as a result of greatest hits albums, many casual listeners were able to understand what made that musical group remarkable. The albums also encouraged renewed interest in people who were already fans of the group. One consistent idea that the greatest hits album promotes is the popularity of the group. The albums encourage further inquiry into different areas of the band's career, moving people to a deeper appreciation for the band's success.

**Q. Who is your favorite musical artist/group? Why?**

**Q. Which album of theirs best encapsulates their career?**

**Transition:** Greatest hits albums function in such a way that they prod individuals to inquire about their musical group's identity. Today, we will be looking at a myriad of stories from Jesus' earthly ministry that highlight His love and compassion for His creation. When we perceive powerful moments in Jesus' ministry as reflective of His character, it is easy to see why we should be a follower of Jesus.

## Week 10: Matthew 8–9

### Book

**Main Point:** Jesus heals many people as a glimpse of the future kingdom, where there will be no sickness, death, crying or pain.

#### Matthew 8:1–22 [Read]

**Talking Point 1:** Jesus gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of God through His healings.

**Q: How does Jesus distinguish between those who will feast in the kingdom and those who will be thrown into the darkness? Why does He call the latter group “the sons of the kingdom”?**

**Q: Why does Jesus tell the scribe to leave the dead to bury their own dead?**

These two chapters of Matthew are jam-packed with miracle after miracle. After a long sermon about what the kingdom of God is like, Jesus gives us a glimpse of the kingdom, where there will be no sickness, death, crying or pain. Matthew goes through these healings pretty quickly, almost like a bullet-point list of miracles, giving us a sense of just how much healing Jesus did. Of course, it wouldn't be possible to list every story, but this quick narrative gives us a feel for what Matthew summarized at the end of the two chapters – “Jesus went throughout *all* the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing *every* disease and *every* affliction” (9:35, emphasis added).

Jesus's healings weren't just shows of power; they weren't magic tricks. His miracles brought God's authority to His teaching. People believed He was truly from God because no one could have done the miracles He did without God's power (John 3:2). But that wasn't the whole purpose of these miracles. The healings themselves had meaning – they showed the world what God's kingdom would be like. A place with no leprosy, no blindness, no storms, no hemorrhaging, no paralysis, no death. Jesus didn't just proclaim the kingdom of heaven with His words, He proclaimed it with His actions. This is reflected throughout the myriad of stories that we hear in the following two chapters.

#### **8:1–4: Healing a leper**

- The leper showed great respect and reverence for Jesus (kneeling as you would before a king) and submission to His will (“If you are willing”).
- Jesus healed and touched the leper, which was against ritual purity laws (Leviticus 13). He didn't have to touch him. He could have healed him with just a word. Yet Jesus touched him, showing love, compassion and connection to a person who had been isolated from

society and hadn't experienced human touch in a long time. "Yet by touching, Jesus does not actually undermine the law of Moses but fulfills its purpose by providing cleansing."<sup>ii</sup>

- The man's leprosy was cleansed *immediately*. This word is often used to emphasize Jesus' power.
- Jesus said not to tell anyone, which He often did early in His ministry. Some scholars call this "The Messianic Secret," that Jesus was keeping His identity quiet because He knew they would expect Him to start a political revolution and/or He didn't want fame for Himself.
- Yet, Jesus tells the leper to go show the priests to fulfill his ritual cleansing, which honored the Mosaic law (that Jesus came not to abolish, but to fulfill!) and allowed him to rejoin society.

### **8:5–13: Healing a centurion's servant**

- This was a Roman centurion, yet Jesus said he had greater faith than anyone in Israel.
- This centurion asked for healing for his servant, whom most centurions would have simply considered property and would have been fairly easily replaced from a financial standpoint.<sup>iii</sup>
- The centurion also showed great reverence for Jesus, calling Him "Lord," and saying, "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof." The centurion would have had a much higher honor/status level than Jesus, so this statement would have been shocking and truly upside-down. He also showed faith in Jesus' authority from God to do the miracle with just a word.
- Like the leper, the servant was healed immediately.
- Jesus marveled at his great faith and explained that many Gentiles ("from east and west") will enter the kingdom of God while many Jews ("sons of the kingdom") will go to hell. Belonging to the kingdom is based on personal faith, not family background or religious ritual.<sup>iv</sup>

### **8:14–17: Healing Peter's mother-in-law**

- Jesus didn't just do miracles in public, as part of His official ministry. He healed in private, in the course of His day-to-day life.
- Verses 14–15 emphasize the fact that Jesus first ministered to her and then she ministered to Him. When healed, disciples respond by serving Jesus.<sup>v</sup>
- Matthew emphasized that Jesus healed *all* who were sick and cast out demons with *just a word*. This level of power ("with just a word") was unheard of, and a sharp contrast to the magicians of the day.<sup>vi</sup>

- Matthew related this all to the words of Isaiah, which pointed ahead to Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross. Jesus’ healing of physical disease was a sign of the greater healing that is to come.

**8:18–22: *On following Jesus, two points:***

- Following Jesus may cost a disciple even the most basic security, like a stable place to live. Jesus was completely dependent on donations to His ministry and the hospitality of strangers, which was considered a wretched lifestyle. Was this scribe ready to lose honor to follow Jesus?
- Following Jesus takes precedence over all other societal obligations. This is not as cold as it sounds. In their culture, “I must first bury my father” was a phrase that meant to wait till your father dies, which could be years.<sup>vii</sup> By this, Jesus was again claiming His divinity because obligation to family was *only* trumped by obligation to one person – God.<sup>viii</sup>

**Q: How does Jesus’ response to these people who needed healing make you feel about how He responds to you when you come to Him?**

**Q: How is God asking you to respond in faith to these stories?**

**Q: What other priorities do you often put ahead of Jesus? How can you put Him first?**

**Matthew 8:23–9:17 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** It’s all about personal faith, not your pedigree or religious ritual.

**Q: Why does Jesus criticize the disciples’ faith in the storm?**

**Q: What do Jesus’ words about sinners teach us about who will enter the kingdom?**

**8:23–27: *Calming the sea***

- Because of the climate around the Sea of Galilee, violent storms commonly come up quickly out of nowhere.<sup>ix</sup>
- In the ancient world, ability to sleep during trouble and remain calm during a storm were signs of a great trust in God.<sup>x</sup> Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith, then rebuked the storm.
- This story again shows Christ’s divinity; only God can calm storms.<sup>xi</sup>

**8:28–34: *Healing two demon possessed men***

- The demons immediately knew who Jesus was (“Son of God”) and feared Him. James said mere belief and fear of God is not enough; even the demons do that (James 2:19).

- This healing alludes to a future time when Jesus will fight the demonic realm (the future final battle). Jesus showed authority over the demonic world even then. He gave His disciples the same authority (Matthew 10). We have the same power by God's armor (Ephesians 6:10–18).
- The presence of pigs indicates this was a Gentile area of Galilee.
- The city's reaction shows that these people were more concerned about their financial ruin (the death of the pigs) than they were about the deliverance of the possessed men.<sup>xii</sup>

### ***9:1–8: Healing a paralytic***

- "His own city" – Capernaum, where Peter lived, became Jesus' home base during His ministry.
- For friends or family to bring a paralytic to Jesus showed their great faith and love. In most of these stories, Jesus emphasized the faith of those who came to Him for healing.
- Jesus showed His divinity again. Only God can forgive sins, which is why the scribes thought it was blasphemy (note: Jesus read their minds).
- To prove He was God, He also healed the man – the harder saying to prove tangibly. "Son of Man" was a divine figure from Daniel 7; He was equating Himself with God.
- While the scribes were angry, the people's reaction was awe of Jesus and glory to God.
- That Jesus forgave sin first shows that what we really need is forgiveness of sins, not physical healing. The miracle points to the Gospel message of the kingdom.

### ***9:9–13: Calling Matthew, eating with tax collectors***

- In the context of two chapters of healing, Jesus used the metaphor that only those who are sick need healing. The implication is that all of us are spiritually sick.
- Tax collectors were some of the most despised people in Jewish culture because they worked for the enemy (Rome) and added extra tax to pocket the difference. Tax collectors and Pharisees were contrasted, respectively, as the least and most pious Jews in their culture.
- Meals were a shame/honor situation; people did not eat with those of lower status. The Pharisees' comments were an official honor challenge. Jesus responded by shaming their knowledge of the Scriptures ("go and learn").<sup>xiii</sup>
- Jesus called nobodies and sinners to be His disciples. Entrance to the kingdom doesn't come from pedigree, past lifestyle, or religious ritual, but a faith that follows Jesus.

### ***9:14–17: New wineskins***

- John the Baptist lived like a Nazarite (Numbers 6), taking vows of abstinence from alcohol, haircuts and contact with dead bodies to symbolize dedication to God.

- Jesus fasted at least once in His ministry (Matthew 4), probably more, but He didn't defend Himself with that. He answered with a theological explanation that now (while Jesus was with them on earth) was time for celebration, not fasting. Jesus was alluding to Himself as the groom of God's people in the coming messianic banquet of the kingdom.
- Jesus described this kingdom as new wineskins and new cloth. God was doing a new thing in this covenant. It will not fit into old paradigms and practices. This is not a denigration of the Old Covenant, but a fulfillment ("both are preserved").<sup>xiv</sup>

**Q: How have you been tempted to unfairly judge "sinners" that Jesus has brought into His kingdom? How can we change our attitudes and our hearts?**

**Q: How have you personally experienced evil in this world (not necessarily actual demons, but evil)? How can your faith in Jesus help you in the battle against evil?**

**Q: What "storms" are you experiencing in your life? How can you trust Jesus through them?**

### **Matthew 9:18–38 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** Christ has compassion on His people like a good shepherd.

**Q: Compare and contrast the two women in vv. 18–26. How did Jesus respond to them?**

**Q: What was Jesus' heart toward the crowds of people? How does that reflect God's heart?**

#### ***9:18–26: Healing two women***

- The woman was an outcast; the girl was an important man's daughter. Jesus called the woman "daughter." The woman had been bleeding for 12 years; the ruler's daughter was 12 years old (Luke 8:40–56). The woman touched Jesus; Jesus touched the girl. Both the ruler and the bleeding woman showed great faith, that Jesus could heal with only a touch. Both touches (of a dead body and of one who was bleeding) made Jesus ritually unclean but brought healing to them.
- The woman touched only the fringe of his robe, a gesture of fervent entreaty.<sup>xv</sup>
- Jesus showed that He placed great value on women in a world where women were often viewed as worthless, just property.

#### ***9:27–31: Healing two blind men***

- The blind men showed faith that Jesus was the Messiah ("son of David"), yet He still asked if they believed He was able. "Lord" was an answer of reverence.
- Jesus tried to keep them quiet, but they told everyone anyway.

- Here Jesus made the strongest connection yet between faith and healing (“according to your faith”). Later, Matthew said Jesus didn’t do many miracles in an area “because of their lack of faith” (13:58). It doesn’t necessarily follow that if you pray for your mother to be healed and she dies, that you didn’t have enough faith, but that “Jesus refuses to heal without faith. He is not a magician, but one who seeks to glorify His Father.”<sup>xvi</sup>

**9:32–34: *Healing a demon possessed man***

- Another demon-possessed man, this time mute, to pair with the blind men earlier.
- The crowds marveled, but the Pharisees accused Jesus of using Satan’s power to cast out demons. Later He told them this wasn’t logical because a kingdom divided against itself would not stand (12:22–28). These are two opposing kingdoms—evil and God’s kingdom.

**9:35–38: *Conclusion – Christ’s compassion***

This is a quick summary of all that happened in these two chapters and what it says about who Jesus is – that He is God Himself, come to earth to proclaim His kingdom come.

- His power is absolute – He heals *every* disease. His miracles are there as signs to accompany His teaching and His proclamation of the kingdom.
- He is the Good Shepherd, the metaphor the Old Testament so often uses for God. Jesus would be the shepherd for His people that their human shepherds failed to be (Ezekiel 34).
- “Harassed and helpless” is a stronger term in the Greek. *Harassed* literally means “skinned alive.” They hadn’t just been left alone; they were abused and mistreated by thieves and robbers (false teachers) because they didn’t have a good shepherd (leader) to protect them.
- “Compassion” literally means to be moved to the bowels, the deepest part of you. All of Jesus’ ministry, His self-sacrifice, is motivated by His deep love for us. His heart is broken for His sick people who so desperately need to be healed.
- The harvest refers to the final judgment, the separation of the wheat from the chaff (3:12; 13:30). Jesus later told them that only God can separate them; only He can tell the difference (13:30). God is the Lord of the harvest, but He needs workers in the field to share in His mission to proclaim the kingdom. As Jesus commanded at the end of Matthew and alluded to here, all His disciples are called to carry on His mission, to make more disciples who make more disciples until the harvest (28:18–20). Though the harvest may still be far off, there is an urgency here. The people are lost and hurting.

**Q: How do these chapters affect your view of faith?**

**Q: How can we all develop more faith? Where does faith come from?**

**Q: Do you feel an urgent burden to seek and save the lost? Why or why not? How can you develop the heart of Jesus for His people?**

**Q: Is Christ's compassion *only* about saving sinners at the harvest or is it about more than that? How do we know from these chapters? From the rest of the Gospels? What does that say about the kind of heart of compassion we should have?**

## **Week 10: *Matthew 8–9***

### **Took**

**Main Point: Jesus heals many people as a glimpse of the future kingdom, where there will be no sickness, death, crying or pain.**

Renewed perspective on the life of Jesus is crucial to how we renew our minds. Just as old listeners are brought back to remembering their favorite tunes because of a greatest hits album, we, too, should look to be reminded constantly about the faithfulness of Christ through reading about His ministry. In this contemplation and remembrance, we can earnestly pursue Christlikeness in our thoughts and deeds. Confronting the person of Christ should always push us to consider how we can best build His kingdom.

**Q. How can we practically remind ourselves of the goodness of Jesus on a consistent basis?**

**Q. What steps can you take to ensure that you take your walk with Jesus seriously every day?**

### **CHALLENGES**

**THINK: In what areas is your faith weak?** Where do you see yourself in these stories? What things are you prioritizing over Jesus, like the man in 8:18–22? Is there anything you are unwilling to give up in order to follow Jesus? How are you like the Pharisees who couldn't see their own spiritual sickness? In what ways are you like the sinners and tax collectors? Do you have the faith of the bleeding woman or the blind men or others who came to Jesus? How can you get that kind of faith? What does that kind of faith like?

### **PRAY:**

- For faith like the people in these stories.
- For wisdom to understand what it really means to follow Jesus by faith.



- For healing for anyone in your life who is hurting, especially for those who need forgiveness of sins and spiritual healing, the most important type of healing. To have the same heart as Jesus for His people, for the urgent burden to share the Gospel with those who need to hear it, for His compassion for any who are hurting or struggling in any way.

**ACT: Find some way to show compassion to someone who is hurting.** It might be sharing the Gospel with someone who doesn't know Jesus, or it might be a more tangible way of showing them God's love and healing. Either way proclaims the Gospel of the kingdom, through preaching the message of the Gospel or through the acts of healing and mercy.

## Hook, Took & Editing by Hayden Seeley

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