

The Authority of the King to Forgive Sin

by John F. Walvoord

Jesus demonstrates His power to forgive sin and heal disease, while teaching the importance of faith in His healing ministry and the need for laborers to help with the harvest.

Scripture: Matthew 9:2-36

Topics: "Divine Authority", "Gods Grace"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches on the Healing of the Paralyzed Man, emphasizing Jesus' authority to forgive sins and perform miracles, showcasing His power over nature, demons, disease, and sin. The call of Matthew highlights the importance of reaching out to sinners and the inadequacy of religious traditions in the face of God's grace. Through healing two women, Jesus demonstrates His compassion and power over death, while healing two blind men showcases the importance of faith in receiving miracles. The compassion of Jesus for the multitudes reveals His heart for lost souls and the need for laborers in the spiritual harvest.

Transcript

Healing of the Paralyzed Man, and His Forgiveness, 9:1-8

After being rejected by the people of Gadara, Jesus returned by boat to the other side of the lake to Capernaum. There, a man, paralyzed and lying on a bed, or couch, was brought to Him (cf. Mk 2:3-12; Lk 5:18-26). Recognizing the faith of his friends who had brought him, Jesus first said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mt 9:2). This was done deliberately by Jesus, knowing the unbelief of the scribes who were watching and who, in their hearts, thought that He committed blasphemy.

Replying to the unspoken objection, Jesus posed the question as to whether it was easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or to say, "Arise and walk." Obviously, merely to say either was easy. In the case of forgiveness of sins, there would be no way to demonstrate whether it had been accomplished, but to say, "Arise and walk," would have the testimony of immediate healing. To demonstrate His power to do both, however, Jesus then said to the man, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (9:6). Before them all, the man arose from his sick bed, taking up the portable couch on which he was lying, and departed as the multitude marveled. This miracle closes the second group of three, demonstrating Christ's control over nature, the demon world, and His power both to heal disease and to forgive sin.

Call of Matthew, 9:9-17

Before introducing the third group of miracles, Matthew records briefly his own call to the ministry (cf. Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27-29). In the parallel accounts in Mark and Luke, he is called Levi; but here, he refers to himself as Matthew. As an official in the tax office, he left his lucrative position in order to follow Christ. This tax office, located at Capernaum, probably had the responsibility of collecting taxes from those who were on the caravan route from Damascus to the East, which passed through Capernaum. As a tax collector, he probably knew Greek well, which qualified him for writing this gospel in the Greek language.

The incident which followed, according to Luke 5:29, was a feast, which Matthew held in his own house for Jesus. It possibly was Matthew's way of introducing Jesus to his fellow tax collectors. To eat with publicans or tax collectors, however, was frowned upon by the Pharisees, who considered tax collectors as the enemies of their people and as those who were compromising morally. As W. H. Griffith Thomas notes, "A tax-gatherer was one who elicited intense animosity on the part of the Jews who strongly opposed this work of Roman domination."⁵⁰ The Pharisees, complaining to the disciples, drew from Jesus the reply, "They that [are] whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Mt 9:12). He then cited to them Hosea 6:6, which brings out that God prefers mercy to sacrifice, a point mentioned only by Matthew. In the process, Jesus declared, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mt 9:13).

Objections were also raised by the disciples of John, who, perceiving Jesus attending a feast such as this, wanted to know why the disciples of Jesus did not fast like the Pharisees. To them, Jesus replied that it is unfitting to mourn during a wedding feast, implying that this was not the time in Christ's ministry to mourn. He prophesied, however, that the time would come when the Bridegroom would be taken away and they then could fast. In this, He anticipated His own death and ascension into heaven.

This attempt to apply the standards of the Pharisees to the new dispensation, which Jesus was introducing, was, in His words, like adding new cloth to an old garment or putting new wine into old wineskins. The Pharisees' religion, including its fasting, was quite inadequate for what lay ahead, whether it be the dispensation of the church or the dispensation of the kingdom. As Ironside expresses it, "He had not come to add something to the legal dispensation but to supersede it with that which was entirely new... The new wine of grace was not to be poured into the skin-bottles of legality."⁵¹

Two Women Healed, 9:18-26

As Jesus was discussing His answer to the question of the disciples of John, a ruler of the Jews came and, having done obeisance, petitioned Him to raise his daughter whom he declared to be already dead (cf. Mk 5:21-43; Lk 8:40-56). As Jesus followed him, a woman in the crowd, afflicted with an issue of blood for twelve years, touched the hem of His garment, believing that if she could but touch His garment, she would be made well. In Mark 5:30, Christ is recorded to have asked the question, "Who touched my clothes?" In response to the question, the woman identified herself. Matthew does not include these details but records the comforting words of Christ that her faith had made her whole.

The journey to the ruler's house continued, and upon arrival, Jesus saw the musicians who had been hired to play the dirges, as was customary when a death occurred. He told them, however, "Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth" (Mt 9:24). They responded by laughing with unbelief. Jesus, having put the people out of the house, took the maid by the hand, and she was immediately restored. Because Jesus used a word for sleeping (Gr. *katheudo*) not customarily used in Scripture for death, some expositors believe that she was not actually dead, but merely in a stupor.⁵² Most commentators, however, believe that Christ was merely declaring to them that she was sleeping, in the sense that she would soon rise.

Actually, her parents were correct that she was dead. The report of the miracle was given widespread notice and added to the fame of Christ, which would have involved a degree of deception if she were not actually dead.

Healing of Two Blind Men, 9:27-31

This account, found only in Matthew, records Christ's encounter with two blind men who followed Him, saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us" (9:27). Apparently, because Jesus did not heal them immediately, the blind men followed Him into the house. Having thus tested them, Jesus asked if they believed He was able to heal. When they replied in the affirmative, He touched their eyes saying, "According to your faith be it unto you," and they were healed. Although He told them not to tell anyone, they nevertheless spread abroad His fame. The prohibition of revealing that they had been healed was probably due to the fact that Jesus did not want to excite followers who would come to Him simply to be healed.

Another Demoniac Healed, 9:32-35

As the blind men were leaving with their newfound sight, a man was brought in, possessed of a demon and unable to talk. This account also is found only in Matthew. Christ, according to the record, immediately healed him so that he was able to speak, and as the multitudes watched, they marveled, saying that such miracles had never happened before in Israel. The Pharisees, however, continued to be unbelieving, accusing Him of casting out demons by Satan, the prince of demons. The account of this miracle is followed by a statement summarizing Christ's ministry of teaching and preaching, accompanied by healing all who came to Him.

Compassion of Jesus for the Multitudes, 9:36-38

Although the miracles of Christ had attracted hundreds of followers, Jesus was all too aware of their spiritual needs. Their faith was superficial, and they were like sheep without a shepherd. His compassion for them moved Him to say to His disciples that they should pray for laborers, for the harvest was great and the laborers few. The great miracles He had performed, recorded in Matthew 8-9, were not accepted by many of the Jews, and growing evidence of unbelief is found in the chapters which follow. As Kelly observes, "The Lord is utterly rejected in chapter 11. And then chapter 12 gives the final pronouncing of the judgment on that generation... The consequence is that the Lord turns from the unbelieving race and introduces the kingdom of heaven, in connection with which He gives the parables in chapter 13."⁵³

In what sense did Jesus introduce the kingdom of heaven at this point? Obviously, He had been talking about kingdom principles all through the gospel of Matthew. The change here relates to the kingdom in its mystery form, the kingdom as it will exist between the first and second comings of Christ, in contrast to the millennial kingdom, predicted in the Old Testament and to be fulfilled after His second advent.

50 W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Outline Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 129.

51 H. A. Ironside, *Expository Notes on the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 109.

52 R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, p. 100.

53 William Kelly, *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 217.

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