

# Matthew 8

by John Nelson Darby

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*In Matthew 8, Jesus demonstrates His authority and compassion through miracles while highlighting the faith of Gentiles and the rejection He faced from His own people.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 53:4, Matthew 8:1-4, Matthew 8:10, Matthew 8:16-17, Matthew 8:20, Matthew 8:26-34, Luke 4:18-19, John 1:11, Romans 11:17-18

**Topics:** "Rejection of Christ", "Divine Grace"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby expounds on Matthew 8, illustrating how Jesus began His ministry among the Jews, showcasing His divine power and compassion through miracles, such as healing a leper and casting out demons. He emphasizes that Jesus, while fulfilling the law, also opened the door for Gentiles to enter the kingdom, highlighting the faith of a centurion as a pivotal moment. The sermon reflects on the rejection Jesus faced from His own people, despite His acts of grace and healing, and the moral implications of this rejection. Darby notes that Jesus' presence was both a source of healing and a challenge to the status quo, ultimately leading to His rejection by those He came to save. The chapter serves as a profound reminder of the tension between divine grace and human unbelief.

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## Transcript

Then, in chapter 8, the Lord begins in the midst of Israel His patient life of testimony, which closed with His rejection by the people whom God had so long preserved for Him, and for their own blessing.

He had proclaimed the kingdom, displayed His power throughout the land, and declared His character, as well as the spirit of those who should enter the kingdom.

But His miracles, [See Footnote #24] as well as the whole Gospel, are always characterised by His position among the Jews and God's dealings with them, till He was rejected. Jehovah, yet the man obedient to the law, foreshewing the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom (its establishment in mystery in the world), predicting the building of the church or assembly on the recognition of His being Son of the living God, and the kingdom in glory; and, while detecting as the effect of His presence the perversity of the people, yet bearing on His heart with perfect patience the burden of Israel. [See Footnote #25] It is Jehovah present in goodness, outwardly one of themselves: wondrous truth!

First of all, we find the healing of a leper. Jehovah alone, in His sovereign goodness, could heal the leper; here Jesus does so. "If thou wilt," says the leper, "thou canst." "I will," replies the Lord. But at the same

time, while He shews forth in His own Person that which repels all possibility of defilement-that which is above sin-He shews the most perfect condescension towards the defiled one. He touches the leper, saying, "I will, be thou clean." We see the grace, the power, the undefilable holiness of Jehovah, come down in the Person of Jesus to the closest proximity to the sinner, touching him so to speak. It was indeed "the Lord that healeth thee." [See Footnote #26] At the same time He conceals Himself, and commands the man, who had been healed, to go to the priest according to the ordinances of the law and offer his gift. He does not go out of the place of the Jew in subjection to the law; but Jehovah was there in goodness.

But in the next case we see a Gentile, who by faith enjoys the full effect of that power which his faith ascribed to Jesus giving the Lord occasion to bring out the solemn truth, that many of these poor Gentiles should come and sit down in the kingdom of heaven with the fathers who were honoured by the Jewish nation as the first parents of the heirs of promise, while the children of the kingdom should be in outer darkness. In fact the faith of this centurion acknowledged a divine power in Jesus, which, by the glory of Him that possessed it, would (not forsake Israel, but) open the door to the Gentiles, and graft into the olive-tree of promise branches of the wild olive-tree in the place of those which should be cut off. The manner in which this should take place in the assembly was not now the question.

He does not however yet forsake Israel. He goes into Peter's house, and heals his wife's mother. He does the same to all the sick who crowd around the house at even, when the sabbath was over. They are healed, the devils are cast out, so that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Jesus put Himself in heart under the weight of all the sorrows that oppressed Israel, in order to relieve and heal them. It is still Emmanuel, who feels for their misery and is afflicted in all their affliction, but who has come in with the power that shews Him capable of delivering them.

These three cases shew this character of His ministry in a clear and striking manner. He hides Himself; for, until the moment when He would shew judgment to the Gentiles, He does not lift up His voice in the streets. It is the dove that rests upon Him. These manifestations of power attract men to Him; but this does not deceive Him: He never departs in spirit from the place He has taken. He is the despised and the rejected of men; He has nowhere to lay His head. The earth had more room for the foxes and the birds than for Him, whom we have seen appear a moment before as the Lord, acknowledged at least by the necessities which He never refused to relieve. Therefore, if any man would follow Him, he must forsake all to be the companion of the Lord, who would not have come down to the earth if everything had not been in question; nor without an absolute right, although it was at the same time in a love which could only be occupied by its mission, and by the necessity that brought Him there.

The Lord on earth was everything or nothing. This, it is true, was to be felt morally in its effects, in the grace which, acting by faith, attached the believer to Him by an ineffable bond. Without this, the heart would not have been morally put to the test. But this did not make it the less true. accordingly the proofs of this were present: the winds and waves, to which in the eye of man He seemed to be exposed, obeyed His voice at once-a striking reproof to the unbelief that woke Him from His sleep, and had supposed it possible for the waves to engulf Him, and with Him the counsels and the power of Him who had created the winds and waves. It is evident that this storm was permitted in order to try their faith and manifest the dignity of His Person. If the enemy was the instrument who produced it, he only succeeded in making the Lord display His glory. Such indeed is always the case as to Christ, and for us, where faith is.

Now the reality of this power, and the manner of its operation, are forcibly proved by that which follows.

The Lord disembarks in the country of the Gergesenes. There the power of the enemy shews itself in all its horrors. If man, to whom the Lord was come in grace, did not know Him, the devils knew their Judge in the Person of the Son of God. The man was possessed by them. The fear they had of torment at the judgment of the last day is applied in the man's mind to the immediate presence of the Lord: "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" Wicked spirits act on men by the dread of their power; they have none unless they are feared. But faith only can take this fear from man. I am not speaking of the lusts on which they act, nor of the wiles of the enemy; I speak of the power of the enemy. Resist the devil and he will flee from thee. Here the devils wished to manifest the reality of this power. The Lord permits it in order to make it plain, that in this world it is not merely man that is in question whether good or bad, but that also which is stronger than man. The devils enter into the swine, which perish in the waters. Sorrowful reality plainly demonstrated that it was no question of mere disease or of sinful lusts, but of wicked spirits! However, thanks be to God, it was a question also of One who, although a man on earth, was more powerful than they. They are compelled to acknowledge this power, and they appeal to it. There is no idea of resistance. In the temptation in the wilderness Satan had been overcome. Jesus completely delivers the man whom they had oppressed with their evil power. The power of the devils was nothing before Him. He could have delivered the world from all the power of the enemy, if that only had been in question, and from all the ills of humanity. The strong man was bound, and the Lord spoiled his goods. But the presence of God, of Jehovah, troubles the world even more than the power of the enemy degrades and domineers over mind and body. The control of the enemy over the heart too peaceful, and alas! too little perceived-is more mighty than his strength. This succumbs before the word of Jesus; but the will of man accepts the world as it is, governed by the influence of Satan. The whole city, who had witnessed the deliverance of the demoniac and the power of Jesus present among them, entreat Him to depart. Sad history of the world! The Lord came down with power to deliver the world-man-from all the power of the enemy; but they would not. Their distance from God was moral, and not merely bondage to the enemy's power. They submitted to his yoke, they had become used to it, and they would not have the presence of God.

I doubt not that that which happened to the swine is a figure of that which happened to the impious and profane Jews who rejected the Lord Jesus. Nothing can be more striking than the way in which a divine Person, Emmanuel, though a man in grace, is manifested in this chapter.

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#### Footnotes for Matthew 8

24: The miracles of Christ had a peculiar character. They were not merely acts of power, but all of them of the power of God visiting this world in goodness. The power of God had been often shewn specially, from Moses, but often in judgment. But Christ's were all the deliverance of men from the evil consequences sin had brought in. There was one exception, the cursing the fig tree, but this was a judicial sentence on Israel, that is, man under the old covenant when there was great appearance but no fruit.

25: I subjoin here some notes, made since this was written, as throwing, I think, light on the structure of this Gospel. Matthew 51 gives the character required for entrance into the kingdom, the character which was to mark the accepted remnant, Jehovah being now in the way with the nation to judgment. Chapters 8, 9 give the other side-grace and goodness come in, God manifest, His character and actings, that new thing which could not be put into the old bottles-still goodness in power, but rejected, the Son of man (not Messiah) who had not where to lay His head. Chapter 8 gives present intervention in temporal goodness with power. Hence, as goodness, it goes beyond Israel, as it deals in grace with what was excluded from

God's camp in Israel. It includes power over all Satan's power and sickness and the elements, and that in taking the burden on Himself, but in conscious rejection. Chapter 8: 17-20 leads us to Isaiah 53: 3, 4, and the state of things calling for the wholly following Him, giving up all. This leads to the sad testimony that, if divine power expels Satan's, the divine presence manifest in it is insupportable to the world. The swine figure Israel thereupon. Chapter 9 furnishes the religious side of His presence in grace, forgiveness, and the testimony that Jehovah was there according to Psalm 103, but there to call sinners, not the righteous; and this was especially what could not suit the old bottles. Finally, this chapter practically, save the patience of goodness, closes the history. He came to save Israel's life. It was really death when He came: only, wherever there was faith in the midst of the surrounding crowd, there was healing. The Pharisees shew the blasphemy of the leaders: only the patience of grace still subsists, carried out towards Israel in chapter 10, but all found to be of no avail in chapter 11. The Son was revealing the Father, and this abides and gives rest. Chapter 12 develops fully the judgment and rejection of Israel. Chapter 13 brings Christ as a sower, not seeking fruit in His vineyard, and the actual form of the kingdom of heaven.

26: One who touched a leper became himself unclean, but the blessed One did come thus close to man, but removed the defilement without contracting it. The leper knew His power, but was not sure of His goodness. "I will" declared it, but with a title which God only has to.

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