

Lesson #9- Matthew Chapter 8 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):

1. A leper comes to Jesus.
 - a) What does Matthew record about the way he approaches Jesus?
 - b) How does Jesus respond to the leper's request?
 - c) After the leper was cleansed, what instructions did Jesus have for the man and why do you think Jesus told him to do this?

Help for Teachers:

- a) Matthew records that as soon as the leper approached Jesus, he worshipped Him. The religious leaders, as we will soon see, don't know how to handle Jesus but are determined to not acknowledge Him as God. Multitudes were gathering to see what He would do next or to be healed, but often even those that were healed didn't confess Him as Lord. Before this leper ever asked for anything, he worshipped Jesus. Then, the leper makes no assumptions, he humbly reveals his request by saying, "**Lord**, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean". In the way this leper came to Jesus we can see how any sinner must come to the Savior, in faith and repentance (Mark 1:15). To come and worship as he did, the leper had surely heard the message of the gospel Jesus was teaching and believed, therefore he worshipped. Now, in the humblest of fashions, he approaches the Master for the healing that only God can provide, knowing that his fate is wrapped up in the will of the King (Rom 9:14-24).
- b) The response of Jesus is overwhelming. Jesus reaches out to touch this unclean man that has come to him in faith and helplessness, and simultaneously speaks the words, "**I will**; be thou clean". And clean he was, "immediately" the leprosy was gone. Can you imagine the joy this man felt when Jesus, without pause, announced "I will"! Jesus wants to save His people (John 6:37).
- c) In accordance with the mosaic law, a leper who becomes healed from his leprosy must report to the priest for inspection and verification, as the law requires (Lev 13). Jesus tells the healed man not to tell anyone, but to go directly to the priest. The priest would be required to verify the healing based on the proofs prescribed by the Mosaic law, then the cleansed man was to offer the sacrifice as Moses instructed. Jesus gave this reason, "for a testimony unto them". The religious leaders were determined to discredit Jesus as the Messiah. By forcing the priest to acknowledge that this man had been indeed cleansed of leprosy by the words of Jesus, was powerful. Jesus' most influential antagonists now had no choice but to confirm the miracle, a thing no human could do, and that before the people.

2. A centurion comes to Jesus because his servant is in terrible pain with the palsy.
 - a) What did Jesus say He would do?
 - b) What was the centurion's reply and what did Jesus find so amazing about it?
 - c) Discuss Jesus' statements in verses 11 and 12.

Help for Teachers:

- a) Jesus said, "***I will*** come and heal him". Jesus expresses here that He is willing to go to where the sick servant lie, but in the realtest of senses, Jesus already had ***willed*** to leave His throne and all the glories He shared with the Father in heaven (Phil 2:6-8), and had now come to where we are, for the purpose of healing those that would come to Him in faith from sin and death (2 Peter 3:9).
- b) This centurion of the Roman army demonstrates more faith than any of the Jews to whom Jesus first came, in that he, feeling utterly unworthy that the King of all creation should come into his house, replies that if Jesus "but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." The centurion explains that, as one with authority in the Roman world, he speaks an order and those under his command are compelled to obey; much more he knows that if Jesus, God made flesh, issues a command, it is certain that it will be done. Jesus marveled because this gentile of the pagan Roman world had more faith than any of the natural descendants of Abraham, to whom the law and the prophecies had been given (John 1:11-13). The nation of Israel had been the witnesses of the power of God and charged with the responsibility to bless the nations through the knowledge of God (Rom 9:1-5). The long-awaited Messiah had come to Israel and was now walking the streets of their cities, and yet not one of Israel had faith like this centurion.
- c) Just like this gentile Roman soldier, Jesus says that many will come from the nations (from the east and the west) and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom. But the physical children of Abraham will "be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". This is only understood when we grasp that citizenship in the kingdom of heaven isn't obtained by genetics or by law keeping, both of which most of Israel after the flesh thought would do it for them, but through faith of the finished work of Jesus Christ (Rom 9:30-33). It would be profitable to study all of Romans chapter 9. This passage is often ignored or explained away because it is uncomfortable to many evangelical Christians of the last 150 years, who have been taught heavily free will and a hyper-dispensational view of national Israel. Paul makes it clear that "the children of promise are counted for the seed". So, flesh and blood Israel is not the promised seed of Abraham, but the elect of God of all nations that respond in faith to His call are the "children of promise", "counted for the seed". Starting in verse 9 Paul (under inspiration by the way) makes it emphatic that salvation is indeed according to God's will, and not our own. He uses the example of Jacob and Esau to make his case. Even though Esau

was the first born, God elected that Jacob would be the continuation of the promised seed, determined of God before they were even born (verse 9 through 13). Anticipating push back, Paul asks and answers the question he knows will follow, “Is there unrighteousness with God?”, and follows with the answer, “God forbid.” God has every right to do what He will with His creation (15-29). In Galatians 3:7-14 we find more concerning who are “the children of Abraham. Again, in Galatians 6:14-16, Paul exclaims that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but rather becoming a new creature, and says of those that have peace and mercy through Jesus Christ (the church) that they are “the Israel of God”.

3. Jesus comes to Peter’s house and finds his mother-in-law lying, sick with a fever and heals her. Later that same evening many that were possessed with devils and many that were sick were brought to Jesus and he cast out the spirits and healed them all, fulfilling the prophesy of Isaiah. When Jesus saw that great numbers of people were gathering to see the miracles, He gave orders to go to the other side of the lake. A particular scribe tells Jesus, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Concerning following Jesus, another disciple says, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.”
 - a) How did Jesus respond to each and what do you think His meaning was?

Help for Teachers:

- a) The first said that he would follow Jesus anywhere. So far, he had seen that Jesus healed everyone with a problem. He had seen that Jesus was a mighty teacher. Everything was easy where Jesus was. But there seems to be a part of the equation this man had not considered, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” To be a disciple of Jesus involves submission to His Lordship, which can be costly. To follow Jesus this man would have to give up the physical security of a home and a bed and three square meals a day. Jesus was on a mission that didn’t involve personal comfort. The second man said I will be your follower... later. Right now, there are more important things I must deal with. Read Jesus’ comments in Luke 14:25-33.

4. Verses 23-27 tell of the voyage to the other side.
 - a) Why do you think Jesus was asleep in the ship?
 - b) Discuss the interaction between Jesus and His disciples. What do you think they learned and what did you learn from reading of this adventure at sea?

Help for Teachers:

- a) Maybe Jesus was exhausted. He was fully Man, having come in the flesh for us. His schedule was brutal, and the demands of the people were constant. And He was fully God, He was and is the Master of the seas. He had come to die, but not as the result of a storm, and nothing could keep Him from His purpose. As Jesus continually teaches us when we will listen, He continually taught His disciples during His earthly ministry. Maybe His nap was to provide them with a lesson they would always remember.
- b) Matthew says that the ship was “covered with the waves”. No wooden boat of that day would sustain such conditions for long. As water filled the hull from the crashing waves, the laws of physics would prevail, the ship would become heavier than the water it was floating in, and the boat would sink. At the same time the weight of the water slamming down onto the deck would begin to break the ship apart. The disciples, some of which were seasoned mariners, were terrified and convinced they were going to die. In desperation, they went to Jesus and woke Him from sleep, crying “Lord, save us: we perish”. It could be said that they ran to the only One that could help them for salvation, but Jesus says in response, “Why are ye fearful. O ye of little faith?” These disciples in the ship were already saved, their calling and election was sure. Maybe they, like we oftentimes do, forgot that their life was in the keeping of the one that made the trees that made the boards that made the boat. They forgot (or never really grasped to begin with) that Jesus owns the raging sea, and it responds without question to His commands. Jesus was on a mission to die, but not by drowning in the waters of a storm. He would freely lay down His life and take it up again, in His timing (John 10:17-18). While the disciples were in the boat with Jesus, they were perfectly safe, no matter what it looked like to them. Jesus laid down His life so that we could have life, no matter what it looks like to us, we are completely safe in Him. They were right when they said “Lord, save us”, for indeed He already had. They were completely wrong when they said, “we perish”. Even had God allowed them to die in the storm, even if we die in the storm, they and we will rise again to live forever. Paul, in Philippians 1:21-24, made it clear that in his book, it was better to depart this life and be with Christ, nevertheless he was understanding that God yet had work for him here.

5. 28 through 34 is the famous story of the demons entering into the swine.
- a) What did the devils know that most of Israel (and the world) refused to believe?
 - b) The swine keepers reported all that had happened to the people of the city. How did the city respond to the news and why do you think they reacted in such a manner?

Help for Teachers:

- a) The leaders of Israel took a public position that Jesus was not their King of prophecy. They rejected Him as the Messiah and Savior (John 1:10-12). They accused Him of performing miracles by the power of Beelzebub (Matt 12:24). The people of Israel saw Jesus with mixed responses; a few really believed, many were undecided and waiting to see which way the wind blew, and many more were blindly following their blind leaders in unbelief. In stark contrast, these devils, on sight of Jesus, called Him by name. They acknowledged that He is the Son of God. They knew that He has all authority and recognized that He controls their destiny. The devils believe and tremble (James 2:19). But at the hearing of the gospel many, like Felix in the days of Paul, tremble but refuse to believe because they have an unregenerated heart that won't respond in faith (Acts 24:25). But those that God has chosen, like Paul (Acts 9:1-6) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:23-31), also tremble at the hearing of the gospel, and because God has replaced their heart of stone with a heart of flesh, are born again and respond in faith (Ezek. 36:26-27, John 1:13).
- b) The people of the city came out in mass and earnestly entreated Jesus to leave their country. This seems a strange reaction, seeing Jesus had just liberated the townspeople from the terror of these two possessed men. Scripture doesn't record if the swine keepers made a big deal of losing their pigs, maybe that played a part in the people's response. Whatever the reason, these people wanted nothing of Jesus but for Him to leave. That was and will continue to be the response of those that are perishing (2 Cor. 2:14-17). No matter that many teach that people have within them a natural desire for God, the Bible is quite clear in refuting that false teaching. There is in man a natural awareness that there is a God and that we have offended Him (Ro. 1:18-20), but there is nothing in man's nature that desires God (Rom. 3:10-12).