

Matthew 8C

- Let's return to Matthew's two-chapter section on Jesus' miracles in the Galilee
 - Performing miraculous signs was one of the key ways Jesus demonstrated the truth of His claims
 - Because talk is cheap, but miracles are currency
 - Miracles are, by definition, extraordinary happenings that can't be explained by natural means
 - So when a man accomplishes a miracle, it means God is with him
 - And if God is willing to bestow His power on that person, then it also means God is endorsing the person's claims
 - And therefore, as Jesus accomplished miracles, the Father was testifying by His Spirit that Jesus' claims were trustworthy
 - So these miracles validate every claim Jesus made about Himself
 - In fact, Jesus' miracles were such powerful testimony, that they forced His critics to try and explain them away
 - Like the young Jewish boy who tried to explain one of God's best known miracles

Little Moishe, aged 6, comes home from synagogue excited and his father asks why. He replies that he learned the story of Passover today and it was totally fascinating.

He explains, "Moses was about to take the Jews out of Egypt when suddenly the Israeli Air Force appeared with their thundering jets, and bombed Egypt. Then the Egyptian forces sent out their helicopters and the Israeli Air Force shot them down, whereupon Moses crossed the ocean on Israeli ships."

The father, incredulous at his son's rendition of the Exodus story, asked him, "Is that the story they taught you in school?"

The boy replies, "No, but if I told you the real story, you wouldn't believe me."

- That's the power of miracles...they forced Jesus' audience to consider His claims
 - So in this section, Matthew highlights ten miracles Jesus did while in the Galilee that support His claims to be Messiah and deity
 - He compiled these miracles carefully, to provide a representative cross-section of all that Jesus did in the Galilee
 - And they emphasize Jesus' power and authority over everything: Heaven and earth, body and spirit, this age and the next
 - But as I've mentioned, Matthew changed the order of these events and combined them into three groups of miracles to tell a larger story
 - Today, we cover the final miracle in the first group of physical healings
 - And in this miracle, we'll see clearly how Matthew moved the order of events around

[Matt. 8:14](#) When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever.

[Matt. 8:15](#) He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him.

- In Matthew's account, Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law is recorded after His encounter with the centurion
 - But in reality, these events happened in another moment, on a Sabbath day, immediately following a Sabbath service in Capernaum
 - In that service, Jesus had just healed a man possessed with a demon, and the impact on those present was immediate
 - In our upcoming visit to Israel, we will walk into the very same synagogue in which Jesus performed this miracle
 - And Mark 1:29 tells us that immediately after the Sabbath service, Jesus traveled to Peter's home
 - Turning back to Matthew's description of these events, the first thing worth noting is that Peter had a mother-in-law
 - Which means that Peter had a wife

- In fact, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:5 that all the apostles and all of Jesus' brothers took believing wives
- And Paul adds that this was the right of any servant of Christ
- Which is a denial of any doctrine that claims God's servants must remain unmarried and celibate
- It's likely Peter invited Jesus to his home to serve him a meal following the Sabbath service, not necessarily for the sake of the mother-in-law
 - Nevertheless, as they arrive at the house, Mark says the disciples immediately told Jesus about her condition
 - That suggests her situation was serious, and it occurred to someone that Jesus could be the solution
- In that day, a fever was considered a disease, rather than a symptom
 - As we know today, fever can be caused by any number of ailments, and we don't know what disease she had
 - But whatever the cause, her fever was serious enough that it prevented her from rising from bed
 - And we must assume that it was serious enough that it warranted a supernatural healing
- Matthew then says Jesus went to see the woman, touched her hand, and she was immediately healed
 - Mark describes Jesus as raising the woman out of bed by lifting her hand, and Luke says Jesus rebuked the fever
 - So all three things happened...Jesus spoke against the disease, reached out to touch the woman, and as she was healed Jesus helped her to her feet
 - The touch of Jesus instantly removed the fever and she was all at once able to function normally
 - What an amazing feeling that must have been for her
- This is the third healing of a physical body Matthew has recorded in this first section of miracles
 - There are three groups of miracles in these two chapters

- This first group consists of miracles of healing the body
- The second group of miracles consists of power over Creation
- And the third group of miracles shows Jesus' power over the spiritual realm
- As we complete each section, I want to take a moment to consider Jesus' power over healing, over Creation and over the spirit realm
 - In this section, Matthew showed Jesus healing three diseases: leprosy, paralysis and a general fever
 - The first healing was done by Jesus' Word alone
 - This third healing was done by His touch
 - And in between, Jesus healed without a word or touch, but merely by His will
- Matthew's point is to show us that Jesus has inherent power over the physical condition of humanity
 - He has power to correct our physical weaknesses, our infirmities, our injuries – all our physical limitations
 - Sometimes, He chose to employ a physical element in the process, like a touch or word, but He is not dependent on anything physical
 - He isn't dependent on a word or even on being physically present
 - Merely Jesus' will to heal someone is enough to bring it to pass
- There's something in theology called "The Conservation of Miracles" – it's a principle that holds that God chooses to work through natural means 99.9% of the time
 - This suits His long-term purpose to not turn the whole thing into a side-show
 - This requires us to depend on faith from the Word, not on sight from miracles
 - This doesn't mean that God *can't* do them, or *never* does them – it means He *rarely* does them, because He chooses to work through natural means most of the time

- So it doesn't mean that God didn't intervene if an Aspirin solves your problem – there was still the blessing of God making that available to us
- But there is still a place today for God to work outside of the natural
- Which means that even though Jesus has departed from the earth for a time, and isn't physically present with us, nevertheless, He still has power to heal
 - Jesus lives to intercede for His Church, and He may heal us when He desires, from a distance and without a touch or word, merely by His will
 - And the Bible encourages us to pray for His mercy to heal
 - So we should take full advantage of that opportunity, knowing He has this power to do it
- But even as we recognize Christ's power to heal, we must also acknowledge that He does not grant healing every time we request it
 - In fact, the last time I checked, the death rate for Christians is 100%
 - This body will fail us eventually...and unless Christ returns for us first, physical death is inevitable
 - Therefore, regardless of how many times Christ may say "yes" to our request for healing, sooner or later, His answer to that prayer will have to be no
 - Sooner or later, He will withhold healing and allow our bodies to fail
 - In fact, being healthy is simply the slowest possible way to die
 - Which leads us to an important conclusion that Matthew wants us to understand from observing Jesus' power to heal the body
 - If Jesus has power to reverse the very causes for why our body fails, then that means He has power to grant us eternal life
 - And yet, because we know He doesn't preserve this body forever, then self-evidently, He must have something better in store for us

- And in fact, Scripture teaches that one day, Christ will heal your body permanently and completely
 - But that healing is not accomplished by repairing your current body
 - The Bible says your present body is not an appropriate home for your spirit
 - Your current body is flawed, broken, defective...it was born with a birth defect called "sin", and that problem simply can't be fixed
- So Christ has something better planned for you...He's going to replace our defective bodies
 - In fact, when I say "you", I'm not talking about your physical body at all
 - Because your physical body is not you
 - I like to compare the physical body to a rental car, something we use for a while and then turn back in when we're done with it
 - And like a rental car, we shouldn't get too attached to our current bodies because we know we're going to return it soon
 - The Bible says your body will return to dust, along with the entire earth and all the universe
 - It all burns up and disappears in a future day
 - But the real you, that is your spirit, lives on eternally
 - Ironically, the unbelieving world gets this whole process completely backwards, as is so often the case with unbelievers
 - The world thinks that the physical world will last forever (*i.e.*, billions of years)
 - But they then tell us that people are temporary, that we live a few decades, and then we cease to exist
 - So they make their goal getting the most out of this world, while ignoring any questions of eternity or Heaven or Hell
 - But the truth is exactly the opposite...the world is temporary, it's going to disappear in a day to come, and so will your physical body
 - But you last forever

- Your body may die, but your body isn't you, and after you shed this container, you get something new and life goes on
- So don't put much focus on the condition of your rental car body
- Instead, consider the question of where will we spend eternity?
- And what will you find when you get there?
- So Christ's plan for healing you isn't an extended warranty with unlimited repairs of your current body
 - His solution is replacing that failing body with something much better
 - The Bible says in a day to come, we will be resurrected into new, eternal, glorified bodies
 - Our new bodies will be like Christ, Paul says
 - We will never die again, never hurt, never experience sickness or infirmities, never grow weak, never get old
 - Can you wrap your brain around that?
 - How amazed will we be to experience that life?
 - Will we not thank the Lord every day for having been freed from this curse of death?
 - That will be our eternal state, living with Christ
 - And Jesus' healings in Matthew 8 is our proof that Jesus has the power to make these things happen
 - Our bodies are clay in His hands, and He can mold them – or remold them – as He pleases
 - And He promises to do that for those who come to Him in faith
 - So let me ask you, which would you rather have forever?
 - Would you prefer to hold on to your current body with all its wear and tear and mileage and problems and limitations?
 - Having to experience getting sick, getting injured, and then Jesus healing you only to get sick again down the road?
 - And all the while, your body just gets more wrinkled and frail?

- Is that what you prefer?
- Or would you prefer to turn-in that lemon of a body for a shiny, new body with the new car smell and no dents, no rattles?
 - It never breaks down, it never gets dirty
 - It can't run out of gas
 - It's perfect forever
- Obviously, we all want that new shiny car, and most of us are ready to dump our old, worn out body
 - But as the saying goes...everyone wants to go to Heaven, but no one wants to die
 - You have to be ready to let this one go whenever that times comes, in order to receive that new and better body
 - Consider Paul's attitude when it comes to this topic

2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

2 Cor. 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

2 Cor. 4:18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

2 Cor. 5:1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Cor. 5:2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,

- Paul says don't lose heart by focusing on the decay of your physical body
 - That's what happens when you place too much emphasis on trying to save this body...it causes us to lose heart
 - Because you can't save it, it's a losing battle
- The course of every person's life, Paul says, is decay, whether that happens quickly or takes many decades

- Knowing this, Paul says take satisfaction in your internal man, that is your spirit, as it's being strengthened and matured during this time
- Christ will use your experiences and trials on earth to train you for greater things to come
- Paul calls these experiences light and momentary afflictions
 - Your physical ailments are light and momentary
 - Our crises and disappointments and setbacks and failings and hurts and persecutions are light and momentary
 - They are light when compared to the weight of the glory coming in our new bodies in the Kingdom
 - And they are momentary compared to how long our blissful eternal life will last
- Instead, Paul says Christians should take heart in knowing our "tent" (*i.e.*, our earthly body) is being torn down (dying)
 - For as long as we live in this body, we will groan, meaning we will lament its weaknesses
 - But we also know we're destined by faith in Jesus to receive a new building, a new body from God in the future
 - That new body will be our eternal dwelling, a glorified body for our new spirit in Christ...
 - And that's where we find our hope to get through each day here while we await that glory
- That's a biblical perspective on healing
 - We earnestly seek healing from Jesus in our prayer life, and sometimes, He will choose to heal us
 - But we also know that eventually, He is going to bring this body to an end, one way or another
 - Yet, we know that doesn't mean He's unconcerned with our suffering
 - Rather, He loves us so much that He died in our place to give us something far better...an eternal glorified, sin-free body

- And when we receive our perfect eternal body, then we'll be able to declare, "Jesus has healed me once and forever!"
- That's what Matthew wanted us to understand about Jesus' healing ministry
 - He wanted us to see it with eyes for eternity
 - And notice what Matthew records next

Matt. 8:16 When 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.

Matt. 8:17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES."

- After Jesus' healing that morning in the local synagogue on that Sabbath morning, the news spread fast around that little town
 - Because it was the Sabbath, people didn't venture out seeking Jesus immediately
 - The Pharisees' Mishnah declared that healing was a work that couldn't be done on the Sabbath
 - So the people had to wait until the Sabbath was over
- Notice in v.16, the people called on Jesus only after evening, when the Sabbath had ended
 - So they begin coming to Jesus and He continues to heal all who were ill
 - He's turning no one away, He's not placing demands or preconditions on the people, He just heals them
- But then, Matthew adds commentary in v.17, by quoting from Isaiah 53:4
 - Now when New Testament authors quote an Old Testament Scripture verse like this, they expect the reader to revisit the entire Old Testament passage
 - It's not just that one line that Matthew is referencing, but the entire content
 - So in this case, Matthew is drawing our attention back to the whole context of Isaiah 53
 - Let's read a larger part of that chapter from where this verse comes from

[Is. 53:3](#) He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

[Is. 53:4](#) Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

[Is. 53:5](#) But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

- Many of you will immediately recognize that this passage is describing Jesus' atoning death on the cross
 - Isaiah says the Messiah will be despised by men in His day
 - The Father will assign Christ the role of bearing our griefs, our sorrows, our transgressions
 - God's chastening for sin fell on Jesus, instead of upon us
 - He was crushed because of our iniquities
- Then Isaiah says that by Jesus' scourging, we are healed
 - Now kept in its proper context, it's clear Isaiah was speaking of a spiritual healing
 - The language of the passage is entirely spiritual in nature
 - It talks about transgressions and iniquities
- So the griefs and sorrows refer to the consequences of sin, including both physical consequences now and eternal consequences later
 - Jesus bore our griefs as He hung pierced on the cross
 - Jesus carried our sorrows as He suffered in our place
 - He paid the price for our sin so that we could be spiritually healed though our faith in His sacrifice

- But some have claimed that Matthew quotes Isaiah 53:4 to suggest that Jesus promises to heal our physical bodies every time
 - Their confusion arises partly out of misunderstanding Matthew's version of the Isaiah quote
 - Because it reads a little differently than my Bible's version
 - In my version, the text reads "surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried"
 - Matthew's quote renders it "He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases"
 - Those differences are a result of subtle differences in how we translate the Hebrew
 - The word for "griefs" is literally the word for "sicknesses" in Hebrew
 - And the word for "sorrows" is literally the word "pain" in Hebrew
 - So you can translate Isaiah 53:4 to sound as if it's describing physical healing
 - But the context of Isaiah 53 makes it clear that the prophet was describing the penalties our sin deserved
 - Christ took our place, being pierced, enduring grief and sorrow, smitten of God and afflicted in our place
 - So why did Matthew use the quote here in the context of physical healings?
- And ironically, Matthew was trying to take our attention away from Jesus' physical healings and direct it toward His spiritual healing
 - Because physical healing will always draw a crowd...it brought crowds to hear Jesus' teaching and it will still bring attention today
 - But in that fact, it also has the potential to distract us from the real healing Jesus offers
 - It tends to focus our attention on the temporal, on this body and on this earth
 - And as a result, we may miss the bigger picture

- That Jesus' ministry wasn't about fixing this world...it was recruiting people out of this world and preparing them for the next
 - He wasn't here to repair our body or even this earth...His plan is to replace them both
 - And unless Jesus pays the price for our sin in the way Isaiah described, then there could be no physical healing
 - Without Christ's sacrifice, there's no spiritual rebirth, there's only judgment
- The true healing we all need is to have our spirit healed
 - Healing the spirit puts an end to our sin problem, and with it, comes a solution to our body's decay and death
 - You see, if the body is healed, it still dies eventually anyway
 - But if your soul is healed by Jesus, then you get both a spiritual healing and eventually, a new body that will never die
 - And in the meantime, the Lord in His mercy may also grant you relief from your body's weaknesses and infirmities
 - By healing our bodies, Jesus may allow us a few more years on earth to serve Him, and that's an honorable and godly desire
 - It's a mark of a mature Christian that we hold these two truths at the same time...
 - We have confidence in Jesus' ability to heal, while looking forward to the day we leave this body and receive something better