

# Matthew: His Life And His Gospel – Part 7

**Matthew 8:1-4** [New King James] *“When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, ‘See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’”*

The Greek word translated “leprosy” is “*lēpra*” and is used for a variety of similar diseases which were very contagious.

**A person with leprosy in Ancient Israel and Jesus Christ’s day were banished from their home and village or town. They were sent to a community of lepers until they died.**

One type of leprosy began with nodules that became ulcerated with a foul discharge. Eyebrows fell off, vocal cords became ulcerated. Slowly the sufferer became a mass of ulcerated growths that ended in mental decay, coma and ultimately death.

Another type of leprosy began with the loss of all sensation in some parts of the body, progressing to loss of fingers and toes, until the end of whole hand or the whole foot may drop off.

The duration of this kind of leprosy is twenty to thirty years, a kind of progressive death when a person dies by inches.

As soon as a person was diagnosed with leprosy they were banished from human society, [**Leviticus 13:45-46**]. **No other disease separated a person from other people as leprosy, and there was no cure for leprosy.**

We must **not** overlook the response of the leper who approached Jesus Christ with confidence in His power to heal. The leper approached Jesus Christ with humility and reverence knowing that he was in the presence of a loving and merciful God, the only religious leader who would touch him.

Jesus Christ ordered the healed man **not** to tell people what Jesus Christ had done for him; Jesus Christ often did this, [**Matthew 9:30; Matthew 12:16; Matthew 17:9; Mark 1:34; Mark 5:43; Mark 7:36; Mark 8:26**].

Why did Jesus Christ do this?

Palestine was an occupied country, and the Jews were a proud race, never forgetting they were God’s chosen people.

They dreamed of the day when their deliverer, [the Messiah] would come, but for the most part they dreamed in terms of military conquest and political power.

Jesus Christ feared that with people seeing the power He had to heal and influence peoples’ lives in other ways, He would be an ideal political and military commander to free them from the Roman dominion.

**Jesus Christ also sent this man to the priests to make the correct offering and to receive a certificate that he was clean, so he could re-join society.**

**We have in this healing a physical example of a spiritual disease that can only be cured by faith in Jesus Christ. This disease is called sin.**

**Sin is an incurable disease, in human terms** that we all have, [**Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8**] and can only be cured by faith in what Jesus Christ has done for all humanity, [**John 3:16-17**].

**Matthew 8:5-13** [New King James] *“Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, dreadfully tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ The centurion answered and said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour.”*

The Roman army was divided into legions of 6,000 soldiers and then divided into sixty centuries, each containing 100 men, the commander of each century was called a centurion.

It is interesting to note that every centurion mentioned in the New Testament is mentioned with honour, as in this incident, [**Matthew 27:54; Acts 10:1; Acts 21:30-32; Acts 22:26-30; Acts 23:17-34; Acts 24:23; Acts 27:1, 43; Acts 28:16**].

Not only was this centurion in **Matthew 8:5-13** different to other Roman masters because of his concern for his slave, but the faith that he had in Jesus Christ’s power to heal, a power that annihilates distance.

**Matthew 8:14-15** [New King James] *“Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.”*

**Peter’s mother-in-law gives us a beautiful example to follow; her response to being healed was to serve Jesus Christ and His disciples immediately.**

**Our response to being healed spiritually from the deadly disease called sin should be to serve God and our fellow human beings.**

**Romans 12:1** [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

The Greek word translated “bodies” is “soma” meaning our whole life, physical body, mind and “human spirit,” [**Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11**].

As a result of this complete surrender of our lives, the Holy Spirit can begin to re-educate us, [**Romans 12:2**] and as we follow His lead will generate in us the very character of the Eternal Triune Creator God, [**Galatians 5:22-25**].

This is the beginning of a new life with our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, [**Romans 6:1-8**].

**Matthew 8:16-17** [New King James] *“When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.’”*

We know that all this happened on the Sabbath day, [**Mark 1:21-34**]. Now it was evening, intended by God to be a time of rest to prepare for the daylight part of the day, but **not** for Jesus Christ who was now surrounded by the insistent demands of human need, of all who for fear of the spiritual Jewish

leaders, who considered healing as a work that should **not** be done on the Sabbath, came to Jesus Christ after this Sabbath ended at sunset.

As long as there was a person in need of healing, both physically and spiritually, the divine generosity of Jesus Christ was there to meet those needs.

Matthew showed how this was the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, [**Isaiah 53:4**] that refers to Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

**Matthew 8:18-20** [New King James] *“And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, ‘Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’”*

**Jesus Christ is telling this scribe to think what he is saying and count the cost of doing what you are saying.**

**Luke 14:26-33** [New King James] *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it, lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”*

Luke records the response of Jesus Christ to those who wanted to be a disciple of His. The Greek word translated “hate” is “*misēō*” meaning to love less by comparison. The bearing of His cross is explained by Paul to the Church in Rome, [**Romans 6:1-6**] the crucifixion of our old way of life.

**It is possible to be a follower of Jesus Christ without being His disciple, paying the price of that discipleship.**

**Matthew 8:21** [New King James] *“Then another of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’”*

It is possible that this man was not asking to just attend his father's funeral, but to put off being the follower and disciple of Jesus Christ until his elderly father died. Or it could be not willing to face the wrath of his father if he left their business to follow an itinerant preacher? Or was it his concern for financial security and family disapproval that caused him to not commit himself to Jesus Christ just yet? Jesus Christ did not accept his excuse.

**Matthew 8:22** [New King James] *“But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’”*

**Jesus Christ is telling His followers and disciples that those who are “spiritually” alive will respond to Him in a different way to those who are only “physically” alive. For those who are “spiritually” alive, that is, have the active presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, know that their time of salvation from eternal death is now.**

We are not told the eventual decision that these two men made, so we cannot judge their final response to Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 8:23-27** [New King James] *“Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are*

*perishing!’ But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marvelled, saying, ‘Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’”*

In one sense this was a common event on the Sea of Galilee, because of its geographical position storms could be both sudden and violent. The Greek words used tell us that the waves were so high that the boat was hidden in the trough as the crest of the waves towered over them, yet Jesus Christ slept, out of exhaustion, if we read the full account in Mark chapter four. The disciples as experienced fishermen and sailors knew the extreme danger they were in, but as yet did not fully understand who Jesus Christ was and still is.

**Matthew 8:28-34** [New King James] *“When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’ Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, ‘If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.’ And He said to them, ‘Go.’ So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.”*

Gadarenes was a region south-east of the Sea of Galilee largely inhabited by Gentiles, which explains the herd of pigs. Jews did **not** keep pigs because they were considered unclean and thus unfit to eat. This helps us understand the reaction of these Gentiles when they saw their source of income drowned.

**Demon-possessed people are under the control of one or more demons who are the fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion against the Eternal God.**

[Please download and study the article, ‘*Why Did God Create Satan?*’ listed under main heading ‘*Satan*’ for an explanation of Satan and his demons.]

**Matthew 9:1-8** [New King James] *“So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.’ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemes!’ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,’ then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.”*

Jesus Christ’s own town was Capernaum.

As we have seen repeatedly, Matthew’s gospel was carefully planned and designed.

**Beginning with this chapter we see the opposition beginning to grow, and hear the first hint of the charges which are going to be levelled against Jesus Christ by the religious leaders, which would in the end bring about His death.**

**Jesus Christ was accused of blasphemy –**

Jesus Christ cured the paralytic by forgiving his sins which upset the scribes because He claimed to do what only God can do, so accused Jesus Christ of insulting or slandering God by arrogating to Himself the powers of God.

### **Jesus Christ was accused of immorality –**

**Matthew 9:9-13** [New King James] *“As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”*

**The Pharisees demanded to know the reason that Jesus Christ ate with people who were considered by them to be the worst of sinners. The implication was that Jesus Christ was like the company He kept.**

**Once a person is disliked, it is easy to misinterpret and to misrepresent everything that person does.**

Jesus Christ was showing all true Christians that the Eternal God loves and cares for all human beings that He has created in His own image, even when they have sinned against Him, often because they have been blinded by Satan to the very reason why they exist, [2 Corinthians 4:4; John 8:44; 1 John 5:19].

### **Jesus Christ was accused of slackness in piety –**

**Matthew 9:14-15** [New King James] *“Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.’”*

Jesus Christ and His disciples were not going through the orthodox motions of their religion. John’s disciples fasted as an outward sign of mourning their sin, and to prepare for the coming Messiah that John the Baptist said was about to appear.

Jesus Christ did not condemn fasting for He fasted Himself, [Matthew 4:2] but He emphasised that fasting must be done for the right reasons, [Isaiah 58:3-14]. Jesus Christ was pointing the people towards His Second Coming which all true Christians would be in a spiritual marriage union with Him, [Revelation 19:6-9].

### **Jesus Christ was accused of being in league with the devil –**

**Matthew 9:32-34** [New King James] *“As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marvelled, saying, ‘It was never seen like this in Israel!’ But the Pharisees said, ‘He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.’”*

**It is a strange fact that when people meet something which they do not like or do not understand, they often ascribe it to Satan and not to God.**

In these incidents we see a campaign against Jesus Christ, slanderers at work, whispering tongues poisoning the truth and wrong motives being ascribed.

**Matthew 9:16-17** [New King James] *“No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”*

In Jesus Christ's day wine was not kept in bottles but goat skins sewn to make liquid tight bags which expanded as the new wine fermented. But if this bag was used a second time after it had stretched it would burst as the new wine fermented. A similar thing happens when un-shrunk cloth is used to patch an old garment when it is washed.

**Jesus Christ did not come to patch up the Old Testament religious system of Judaism with its rules and traditions, but a new covenant with God.**

**Jeremiah 31:31-34** [New King James] *“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

**This New Covenant was prophesied by Jeremiah and would be based on the Covenant made with Abraham with his faith in the promises that God made with him, [Romans 4:1-3; Galatians 3:6-9; Hebrews 11:8-12; James 2:21-24].**

**Ephesians 2:8-10** [New King James] *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

We are saved from deserved eternal death, [**Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; 1 John 1:8**] by faith in what God has done for all humanity through Jesus Christ, [**John 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 2:8-10**].

**Luke 22:20** [New King James] *“Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’”*

**Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross to ratify the New Covenant, [Hebrews 9:22].**

**Matthew 9:18-26** [New King James] *“While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.’ So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, ‘If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.’ But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, ‘Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.’ And the woman was made well from that hour. When Jesus came into the ruler’s house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, ‘Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land.”*

Mark and Luke say that this man's name was Jairus, [**Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41**] as ruler of the synagogue, responsible for the administration of the synagogue, looking after the building, supervising worship, running the school on weekdays and finding rabbis to teach on the Sabbath.

The woman mentioned in **verses 20-22** teaches us that in times of desperation we do not have to worry about the correct way to reach out to the Eternal God. Like this woman, we can simply reach out in faith and God will respond.

The synagogue ruler did **not** come to Jesus Christ until his daughter was dead; it was too late for anyone else to help, but Jesus Christ simply went to the girl and raised her back to life.

**This action of Jesus Christ gives great hope for those who have died never knowing Jesus Christ or the New Covenant He brought from God the Father.**

**All such people will be restored to physical life to have their chance of salvation through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, [Revelation 20:11-13].**

Beyond doubt the ruler of the synagogue came to Jesus Christ when everything else had failed. He was one of the men who despised what Jesus Christ was teaching. His motive for coming to Jesus was very inadequate; desperation drove him to contact Jesus Christ.

The woman with twelve years' flow of blood also came to Jesus Christ in desperation, in what seemed more like superstition than faith.

**Matthew 9:27-31** [New King James] *“When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’ And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you.’ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, ‘See that no one knows it.’ But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.”*

“Son of David” was **not** a title that Jesus Christ desired, it was the kind of title that a Jewish nationalist might use.

So many of the Jews were waiting for a great military leader of the line of King David to give them freedom from their Roman masters.

**Again these blind men came to Jesus Christ with a very inadequate concept of who He was.**

**Yet all these with inadequate theology found Jesus Christ's love and power waiting for their needs to be fulfilled.**

**We do not have to wait until our motives, our faith or our theology are perfect to ask for Jesus Christ to be our Saviour. Willing to allow Him to change us to become like Him is all that is needed; it is called repentance!**

**Matthew 9:35-38** [New King James] *“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.’”*

The good news is that through faith in Jesus Christ, His life, teaching, sacrifice and resurrection, all humanity may have the chance to become part of the created family of God, [a kingdom is a family that has grown big] all with the same characteristics of Jesus Christ, [“fruits” of the Holy Spirit, **Galatians 5:22-25**, or the “likeness” of God, **Genesis 1:26-27**].

**For this Kingdom to come to fruition, the Eternal God has allowed human beings to be a part of that process. People who know how to deal with problems that people have, and show them a new way of life that is based on love and compassion for other people, [2 Corinthians 1:3-4; 1 Peter 3:15-16].**

**Romans 12:1-2** [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

This is the starting point of our new life of being one of the labourers that Jesus Christ can use to prepare people to become part of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

A total surrender to the will of Jesus Christ is essential to be under-shepherds of Jesus Christ the good shepherd, [**John 10:11-16**].