

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW; YOUR KINGDOM COME...ON EARTH

Week 15 – JROC – “BEHOLD, A Leper”

May 29, 2022

Matt. 7:28-29 – *And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished (struck with amazement) at His teaching, ²⁹for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* Jesus spoke truth! Truth necessitated and continues to necessitate a decision concerning the truth of Jesus’ words and His Person. Jesus’ words were different from what the scribes spoke. Rather than absolutes, Rabbinic literature/ documents often offer conflicting values! Rabbis before, during, and after Jesus’ day were engaged in what was known as *Pilpul* which means “sharp analysis.” Pilpul was the method of studying the Talmud (Rabbinic opinions) through intense analysis in an attempt to explain various rulings that came down from past Rabbis. The Pilpul method includes extreme disputing among the Rabbis and caustic hairsplitting! The teachings of the Rabbis truly begged the question, “Where’s the authority?” Jesus rested on His own authority as He taught. Jesus taught His word! What are we doing with truth from Scripture?

CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH!

Jude v. 3 - *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered (to commit for maintaining, for safeguarding, for entrusting) to the saints.*

GOD HAS ENTRUSTED US WITH HIS WORD!!!!

Jude was writing to believers whose salvation was NOT in jeopardy. False teachers, however, were preaching and living out a counterfeit gospel (also highlighted in Galatians) and were misleading those who needed to hear the true gospel – the absolute TRUTH! Jude’s message for believers is to wage war against error and to fight strenuously for the truth. Scripture is complete, sufficient, and finished; therefore, it is fixed for all time.

Jude is the only book in Scripture entirely devoted to battling apostasy. Within this book, Jude is presenting the NEED to know sound doctrine (Eph. 4:14; Col. 3:16; I Pet. 2:2; I Jn. 2:12-14), to be discerning in sorting out truth from error (I Thess. 5:20-22), and to be willing to confront and attack error (II Cor. 10:2-3-5; Phil. 1:7, 27; I Tim. 1:18; 6:12; II Tim. 1:13; 4:7-8; Titus 1:13).

How “insightful” is it that we read Jude directly before we turn to the book of Revelation? Jude is telling the Church that the last days for the Church: apostasy in the Church. And, then we read Revelation, the book in which we do NOT see the Church on earth from the beginning of Revelation 4 through to Revelation 19:10. The Church will be removed from earth in the Rapture prior to the tribulation. In Revelation 19:11ff, the Church will return to earth with Jesus Who will fight against the enemy and establish His 1,000-year reign, the Millennial Kingdom, on earth.

FOLLOWING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matt. 8:1 - *When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.*

The purpose of Matthew chapters 8-9 is to offer the credentials of the Messiah as prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures. *When Jesus had come down from the*

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mountain... from delivering what we have entitled the Sermon on the Mount... He continued to demonstrate His authority as the King through countless miracles.

BEHOLD, A LEPER

Matt. 8:2 - *...behold, a leper....* Matthew introduced his readers, and us, to this miracle with “BEHOLD”! Why? The Holy Spirit, inspiring Matthew, wanted the readership, the Jews, to get fixated on... *a leper*. Was this significant?

...behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean. It appears that quite suddenly as Jesus came down from the mountain He was confronted by a leper. Why a leper?

Leprosy was considered a curse. It was incurable. Leprosy was a living death. The leper was cut off from contact with society. Because anyone touching him would be defiled, the leper had to tear his clothes, uncover his head, and cover his lips. When someone drew near, he must call out, “**Unclean! Unclean!**” (Lev. 13:45-46).

This leper boldly approached Jesus!

Leprosy is a graphic illustration of sin’s destructive power.

...behold, a leper came and worshiped Him – honored, exalted, adored, praised Jesus! Perhaps the leper w/ total humility, prostrated himself before the *Lord* (Master). This is the first time in Matthew where Jesus is addressed as *Lord*... depending on the translation. The leper is recognizing Jesus’ authority and deity, *Lord, if You are willing,*

The leper believed that Jesus could make him clean, *...You can make me clean.*

Matt. 8:3 - *Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Jesus purposely touched the leper...the leper who oozed defilement! Jesus could have merely spoken the word and the man would have been healed. CONSIDER: When was the last time this man/this leper had been touched by another human being? Jesus knew that the man needed an emotional healing as well as a physical healing. How Jesus healed the leper demonstrated His kingly authority over sin as well as over physical and emotional disease.

This man was a Jewish leper! How do we know? Jesus instructs him, upon being cleansed, to go to the Jewish Levitical priest...to go to the Temple and offer an offering

according to the Law of Moses (Lev. 14:1-32)! What a huge message to the priests of Jesus' day. There had been no record of any Jewish lepers being cleansed (Lk. 4:27).

The Rabbis taught that only the Messiah would be able to heal a Jewish leper! The Rabbis taught that the world was about to be purified by the coming of the Messiah!
Healing a Jewish leper was considered a Messianic miracle by the Jews!

LEPROSY IN THE MOSAIC LAW

In Lev. 13 and 14, God did not tell the Levitical priesthood how to heal a leper. In the event a Jewish leper was healed, a leper approached the priesthood and declared, "I was a leper but now I have been healed." For the next seven days the priesthood was to investigate to determine the following:

- Was the person truly a leper?
- If this person was truly a leper, was he/she (vv. 29, 38) genuinely cured of the leprosy?

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- If he/she was cured of the leprosy, what were the circumstances of the healing?

If, after seven days of investigation, the priesthood was firmly convinced that the person had been a leper and had been healed of his/her leprosy, then, on the eighth day there would be a series of offerings. The priesthood never had the opportunity to implement these instructions because from the time the Mosaic Law was given, no Jewish person was ever healed of leprosy. As a result, it was taught by the Rabbis that only the Messiah would be able to heal a Jewish leper.

Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, I am willing; be cleansed. Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. How did the multitudes respond? I'm envisioning that they stood still and were struck with amazement as Jesus with a word and a touch transformed this dying man physically, emotionally – and perhaps spiritually! What a demonstration of Jesus' power! Did they hear Him say...

Matt. 8:4 - *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.* This day, the day Jesus healed the Jewish leper, the priest on duty would have a most unique opportunity to see a Jewish man who had just been healed of leprosy by the Messiah Jesus! The priest was to validate the miracle and, most likely, give serious thought as to what it meant!

Acts 6:7 - *Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.* Is it any wonder that the priests...a great many of the priests...came to faith in Jesus? Jesus healed many Jewish lepers and, by so doing, identified Himself as the Messiah. The priests repeatedly witnessed the proof of Jesus' Messiahship!

Jesus deliberately sent the cleansed leper to the priesthood – because it was the law... AND, to get the Jewish religious leaders to begin investigating His Messianic claims and to come to a decision regarding those claims!

JEWISH RESPONSE:

Luke 5:12-16 – (parallel passage) Jesus healed a Jewish leper ...*and He charged him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.'* ¹⁵ *However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.*

Luke 5:17 - ¹⁷ *Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem.*

Why did the Jewish leaders from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem come to Jesus following the healing of the Jewish leper? To investigate Him. This was their response to the first Messianic miracle. According to Sanhedrin law, if there was any kind of Messianic movement, the Sanhedrin had to investigate the situation in two stages. The first stage was called the “stage of observation.” If the movement was declared to be significant, there would then be a second stage of investigation called the “stage of interrogation” when questions would be asked, and objections would be raised.