

# The Kingdom Program Miracles

📖 Matthew 8:1-17

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We are studying the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew was a Jew whose profession as tax collector for Rome ostracized him from his Jewish brethren. A Jew in this profession was classified along with sinners and harlots and composed the bottom rung of Jewish society. But the fact Matthew wrote this gospel shows that God's grace even reaches down to people in that bottom rung. 1 Cor tells us there were not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. Matthew is one of those foolish things chosen by God to be a recipient of his grace through faith. He wrote his gospel over in the Church age, about AD50, even though he was saved prior to the cross. I take it Matthew is the earliest of the four Gospels and so does not have literary dependence on some source, say Q, as scholars call it, or even Mark. Literary dependence is the liberal model of understanding the Gospels that is based in 19<sup>th</sup> century German higher criticism. We don't agree with the highly destructive approach of this criticism. We hold that Matthew wrote not on literary dependence but on Holy Spirit dependence. The Holy Spirit is the primary author of Scripture and the human authors are secondary to the process which we call inspiration. Matthew was borne along by the Spirit of God.

Now the reason he wrote was to answer a need among Jewish believers in Jesus' Messiahship that were living in Jewish communities scattered throughout the Roman world. What was their need? To have an answer for the common Jewish objection to Jesus' Messiahship. What was the objection? "If Jesus was the Messiah then where is Jesus' kingdom?" The OT taught that when Messiah comes He will restore the kingdom to Israel. Since Jesus didn't restore the kingdom then how could Jesus be the Messiah? Matthew's answer is three-fold. First, in chapters 1-11 Jesus has all the credentials of the Messiah. Second, in chapter 12 the Jewish leadership rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Third, in light of the rejection chapters 13-28 explain that the kingdom program has been postponed until a generation of Israel repents. During the postponement there is a new mystery organism called the Church that Messiah is building. When this organism is complete the kingdom program will be back on the table. So that's the general scheme of what Matthew is explaining. The King came, the kingdom was offered to Israel, the

King was rejected by Israel; in the wake of that rejection there is the Church, and when the Church is complete the kingdom offer will come back on the table, Israel will repent, and finally the kingdom will come. Matthew is so Jewish and it has to be read in light of the kingdom program as it was envisioned in the OT. If you read it that way you will come away with a tremendous grasp of God's kingdom program and the mystery Church. If you read it as containing a series of salvation messages and parables you'll be lost. You'll get into a lot of false gospels and theology that way, blending Israel and the Church and losing the whole picture of what God is doing. That's why I steer you clear of most commentaries on Matthew unless you are spiritually attuned to these things.

We are in the first section, Matthew 1-11. In these chapters Matthew, very ably, is demonstrating that Jesus is the Messiah. Having completed the Sermon on the Mount, last time we gave an overview of Matthew 8:1-11:1. This is the main section where Matthew is recording what? A series of great miracles. Why was it important for the Messiah to do miracles? To authenticate that He was the Messiah. He had orthodox teaching, we saw that in the Sermon on the Mount as He contrasted His interpretations with those of the scribes and Pharisees. But to authenticate that He was from God He had to have miracles that accompanied His orthodox teaching. The teaching was the primary thing but the miracles were signs. Israel would be given signs by God that their Messiah had come. The signs in Matthew 8-9 show beyond dispute that Jesus was the Messiah. Did they know He was Messiah? Absolutely they knew. It wasn't a question. Jesus did things no one had ever seen before. What did Nicodemus say to Him? "We know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." There was just no way. These things were so stupendous. They were harbingers, we would say, that the kingdom was at hand. So they knew. That wasn't the problem. What was the problem? The hardness of man's heart. That's always the problem.

Now we said that Matthew records ten miracles. These miracles come in three groups; a group of three followed by a section on discipleship, then another group of three followed by another section on discipleship and then finally a group of four. Matthew is famous for grouping things; in Matt 1 three groups of fourteen, in Matt 5 six laws, in Matt 6 three acts of piety, in Matt 7 three proverbs, in Matt 13 seven parables and so forth and so on. By the way, why is this man so interested in grouping things by numbers? What was this man's profession? Tax collector. What do tax collectors deal with on a day by day basis? Numbers. So is it any surprise that we find him grouping things by number? No, inspiration accounts for protection of the human author's natural condition in life. So three groups of three, three and four respectively for a total of ten miracles.

Now these miracles draw a lot of attention. In fact, John the Baptist didn't have miracles. Why do you suspect a prophet like John didn't have miracles? To offset him from the Messiah. In other words, it might distract people. John was not the Messiah. He was the forerunner of the Messiah and he was

confirmed other ways, by his unique birth to Zacharias and Elizabeth and so forth, but no miracles because that might cloud the issue. He became popular enough to disturb the authorities in Jerusalem and so he gave his message of the kingdom being at hand but that led to his arrest and so he's in prison over in Machaerus on the other side of the Jordan. The Messiah is in the Galilee on center stage, His miracles are mighty; things the world had never seen and never seen since. So they authenticate Him. But they do more than authenticate. Why do we think they do more? Why do we have good cause for thinking there's more to them? Because in Matthew 8-11 Matthew does something interesting. He breaks from the chronological arrangement of his book. Matthew 1-7 are chronological and Matthew 12-28 are chronological. So why is Matthew 8-11 not chronological? Because he's arranging the material thematically. There's a theme he has in mind. So this is something like theological art used to convey a message. Theologians have speculated as to theme Matthew is addressing and we went through some of those last time. Toussaint said, "The order is not chronological; therefore Matthew must have had a purpose in choosing the events he did and placing them in the section which deals with the King's presentation to Israel."<sup>1</sup> My conviction is that the miracles and their arrangement relate to the King and His kingdom program. Matthew chooses the miracles he chooses and groups them as such to demonstrate that Jesus has the ability to do what Adam never did and that is have dominion over nature so as to establish the kingdom. Establish the kingdom where? In heaven? No. On earth. The miracles are done on earth showing that He is Lord of the earth and prepared to fulfill the original dominion mandate given to Adam if Israel will receive Him.

Tonight we will look at the first group of three in Matthew 8:1-17. In this group the miracles lay out in general the kingdom program. First, kingdom offered to the Jews, second, kingdom postponed for a time of great Gentile faith, and third, kingdom restored to the Jews. The Jew-Gentile-Jew sequence of the miracles shows this is Matthew's purpose.

Let's come to the first miracle, Jesus' cleansing of the leper. We read in 8:1, **When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him.** Here we have the setting. A **mountain** is "a relatively high elevation of land that projects higher than a minor elevation." We would not want to read this as a big high mountain like in Colorado. Jesus had just finished the Sermon on the Mount. Tradition places the giving of this sermon near Capernaum. Capernaum is on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee. For perspective, the Sea of Galilee is the lowest freshwater lake in the world. It is 600 feet below sea level. Out of that body of water the hillside rises gradually. So Jesus had just been up on the hillside that rises out of that lake giving the Sermon on the Mount. He now comes down the hillside to the shore of the lake. That's where this healing miracle occurred, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

And who does Matthew say **followed Him**? Not just crowds but **large crowds**. What can we gather from that statement? That Jesus was popular. How had He become popular? There are at least three

things we know that contributed to His popularity. First, His miracles thus far throughout the Galilee had contributed to His popularity. Turn to Matthew 4:23-25. In 4:23 Jesus went through all the Galilee teaching, preaching and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. As a result the news about Him spread throughout all Syria and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering from various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. Large crowds followed Him from every point of the compass, even from beyond the Jordan. So the first reason large crowds **followed Him** is because of His ability to do miracles. Second, His supernatural claims in the Sermon on the Mount. Turn to Matthew 7:21. In 7:21 note that He claimed to be the Son of His Father who was in heaven. This meant that His origin was from heaven, a supernatural origin. In 7:21-23 He also claimed to be the Judge who would control entrance into the coming kingdom. Such claims were simply unheard of, no rabbi claimed to have come from heaven and no rabbi claimed to stand at the gate of entrance to the kingdom. Because Jesus made such stupendous claims many people were curious and **followed Him**. Third, His teaching was impressive. Turn to Matthew 7:28. The crowds in 7:28 are said to have been “amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.” The scribes were not very impressive expositors. They basically quoted previous rabbinic authorities to give commentary. Usually it was boring. Jesus quoted no one. His interpretations were fresh; stimulating thought and calling for action. So because of Jesus’ impressive teaching many **followed Him** down the hillside beside the Lake of Galilee. And as far as we can see, the large crowds that followed Him down the hillside are the same crowds that He initially tried to get away from in 5:1-2. So Jesus was very popular initially and we’ll be following His ratings as we work our way to the rejection in Matthew 12 and the parables that immediately follow in Matthew 13.

In 8:2 we have the first miracle, **a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing You can make me clean.” 3Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”** Now there are a number of very interesting questions raised from this episode. First, we want to know just exactly what posture the leper takes in verse 2. It says, **a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him**. Now, is this just a sign of respect? Many hold that it should only be understood as a sign of respect that was often shown to a rabbi. It’s possible because the Greek for **bow down** is *προσκυνει* and can mean “respect.” However, it can also mean “worship” and that seems better in context. Why does that seem better? Because the leper considers Jesus able to make Him clean and that’s not what a leper would expect of someone he just respected. Rabbis were all respected and yet he’s not going to a mere rabbi. That’s the whole point. Glasscock agrees saying, “It is not likely the leper would have approached a merely respectable person and asked for healing.”<sup>2</sup> So this posture of bowing **down before Him** is an act of worship. The leper considers Jesus as capable of

making him clean. You'll find over and over that everyone knew He could do the miracles. There was no question He could do them.

Now, as a brief aside, did Jesus allow Himself to be worshipped? Apparently. If Jesus permitted Himself to be worshipped then He was either allowing one of the Ten Commandments to be blatantly violated or Jesus is the one true God. And we take it that He is the one true God. If He was not it was the perfect time to clarify that He was not. But He didn't do anything of the sort and thereby we see that He had no trouble being identified as God and worshipped as God. That's the first thing.

Second, while he was worshipping note the address. **And he said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."** Now we might be tempted again to just say **Lord** is a title of respect. The title was commonly used of rabbis as synonymous with the word "teacher." He could be giving Him the respect of a teacher. But note back in 7:21 where Jesus referred to Himself as Lord. What did He say there, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven..." So how is this title used here? As a title of the one who decides who will enter the kingdom and who will not! That's more than a position of respect. The leper probably heard this and so He is addressing Him as the King who has authority to decide the subjects in His kingdom.

Third, note the humility in the request, **Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.** Is there any question in the leper's mind that Jesus could make him clean? Not a question in the world. What is the question? Whether the Lord is willing. **If you are willing**, 3<sup>rd</sup> class condition, maybe You are, maybe You're not, but if You are, **You can make me clean.** The leper fully knew that Jesus could **make him clean.**

Fourth, in phrasing it this way is there any presumption? Presumption is where you approach someone with the intent to obligate them. Did the leper presume upon Jesus' capabilities? There's no presumption here. If he had presumed upon Him he would have said, "If you can make me clean, prove it. Prove it by doing a great sign. That's the sin of presumption. But you don't find that here. There is no sin of presumption. The leper knows He can do it but whether the Lord wants to do that or not is totally up to Him. It's like the incident in the Book of Daniel when Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego are told to bow down and worship the golden statue of Nebuchadnezzar under threat of being cast into a burning furnace. When they refuse what do they say to Nebuchadnezzar? Our God is able to deliver us from the fire. But even if He does not, we're not going to bow down and worship your phony idols. Nonsense. Those men didn't presume God was going to save them. What God decided to do was His business but they were going to worship Him no matter what. The leper has the same mentality of those three men. **You can make me clean** but the decision is totally up to You. You do whatever you want but I'm going to worship you anyway and that's the right attitude! That's how we should approach God in prayer. He's not obligated to us. He can do whatever we ask but it's ultimately up to Him.

Fifth, what's the leper requesting? To make him **clean**. Now this is a special word related to ritual purity under Levitical law. This man was ritually unclean because of his bodily condition of leprosy. What was leprosy? It was a kind of skin disorder. In Lev 13-14 there are a series of skin disorders and I've displayed some of them here. In Leviticus, one is you have a white spot and you go down to the priest and the priest looks at it and if it's more than skin deep then you are unclean. If it's only skin deep and the hair is not white then you are clean. If it's a white spot with a red dot then you're in quarantine and if it spreads it means this and so forth and so on. And if you were unclean then you were supposed to walk down the street with your head uncovered and mustache covered saying "Unclean! Unclean!" Leprosy was in this category and what did the Jews at the time of Christ do with lepers? Ostracized them from the community. It was a detestable disorder so they were usually isolated from the whole of Israel. Now what did the average Jew think was the cause of leprosy or other bodily abnormalities? Sin. Remember the episode? Did this man sin or his parents? What was Jesus' response? "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him." So leprosy was not necessarily a result of sin. That's a key to understanding. In Leviticus sin caused uncleanness but not all uncleanness was caused by sin. So it's apparent that they had some bad theology floating around in Israel because they associated all bodily abnormalities with some sin you or your parents had done. But under Levitical law eating certain foods would make you unclean, we know that, kosher and non-kosher foods. Also, having a bodily discharge would make you unclean, just some fluid coming out of an orifice. Surely that's not due to some sin you did. Touching a dead body would make you unclean. What are you going to do if someone dies in their bed? Someone has to remove the body. But once you touch it you were unclean. And having certain skin diseases like leprosy or some other abnormality rendered you unclean but they weren't caused by sin. Why then did it render the leper unclean? What's going on is we live in a fallen world and just by living in a fallen world we pick up impurities, things that render us unclean from being in a holy God's presence, disease and sickness render us impure because they are abnormalities introduced into creation at the fall. And God is holy, He can't have these things in His presence. So the priests were down at the Temple where God's presence dwelled and they were to evaluate all these little spots to decide if these were impurities they had picked up from living in a fallen world. That's the key to the healing of the leper. It was an impurity that this man had picked up just by living in a fallen world.<sup>3</sup> Well, how does leprosy fit with the kingdom being at hand? Not so well, in the kingdom the curse will be lifted. Diseased people won't be walking around in the kingdom. Lepers won't be there. All that will be resolved. So what's this miracle saying? It's real clear what this is saying. Jesus is the King, He's able to cleanse Israel and bring them into the kingdom, a near perfect environment.<sup>4</sup>

So we have this leprous man, he's got this skin condition that he just picked up by living in a fallen world but it renders him an outcast from the Jewish community and he needs to be made clean. How

did a leper usually become clean? By going down to the priest, going through a big long ritual procedure. How is he trying to become clean? Going to the High Priest! Jesus is acting as a priest. Can Jesus make Him pure? By the way, I refer you to Luke 4:28, how many lepers were cured in Israel? How many Israelite lepers were cured in the OT? None. First time folks, first time there's ever been an Israelite leper cleansed, and that's why Jesus is going to say it's done to be a testimony to the priests. They'd never seen anything like this! This was an incurable disease in their estimation.<sup>5</sup> Who could cure it?

Verse 3, **Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him.** Did people usually touch lepers? No way. Usually you ran the other way. Did Jesus have to touch Him? No. He didn't have to do that, all He had to do was say the word. But He does touch Him. How touching. You know, it's hard for us to imagine but He came down here and He lived in a fallen world just like you and me, among all this impurity and yet He Himself remained pure. I don't know if you realize how remarkable it is that He touched the leper but this is huge. And notice it doesn't just say He touched the leper. It says **He stretched out...and touched him.** He made an effort to touch human infirmities, disease and death. He was in this world, He's been through it and yet did not pick up the stain of it. That's remarkable. And then He said what? **"I am willing; be cleansed."** See, it was totally up to His will. All He had to do was speak the word.

And what was the immediate result? **And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.** Did it take six weeks to heal? Was it a prolonged cure? No. Immediately **his leprosy was cleansed.** I don't know if you realize the immensity of that statement but if you imagine this man going from that condition to perfectly beautiful skin in the blink of an eye you see what happened. The Luke parallel says "immediately the leprosy left him." Mark says both, "immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed." So both happened. This man was cured from leprosy and consequently he was cleansed. It happened in the blink of an eye.

Now verse 4, and this causes debate, **And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."** People debate why Jesus said **tell no one** and there are all kinds of speculations, but probably all that we are to understand is that this was a particular sign to the **priests.** Why the priests? Not just to keep the law, making the proper sacrifice, but as a testimony to the leadership of Israel that Messiah had come. The priests were part of the religious leadership and they would know that no leper in Israel had ever been cured. So the Messiah had come and cleansing was available to Israel through the Messiah. He can cleanse the fallen world and bring in the kingdom. So if cleansing from the impurities of a fallen world is available through Messiah then what's the problem? Israel's response to that is coming in Matt 12.

And in that light we find the second miracle. Remember, this is laying out in general the kingdom program. First a Jew, He can cleanse the Jews, but now, in light of the coming rejection, a time of great

Gentile faith. We're going to argue that the centurion in verse 5 is a Gentile mainly because of Jesus' statement that He hadn't seen such faith in all Israel but Edersheim also says, "We know that such troops [centurion's] were chiefly recruited from Samaritans and Gentiles of Caesarea." Verse 5, **And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him.** Now we're at **Capernaum** and this town was in the same region of the prior miracle, the N shores of the Sea of Galilee. Most of Jesus' miracles occurred in the Galilee. Capernaum was Peter's hometown and it became the base of Jesus' ministry. If you go to Israel in a few months with us we'll go there. It was a military town and that's why we see the **centurion** come **to Him**. Who was a **centurion**? A centurion was a Roman military officer. He commanded 100 men. They were "the backbone of the army" because they formed the strategic link between the higher command and the average soldier. On a day by day basis they were responsible for keeping discipline, inspecting arms and commanding the men both in the camps and in the field. They exercised a lot of authority because they found themselves in field situations that required on the fly decisions. Those who made the rank were well-paid, highly respected and usually made a career out of it.

So here we likely have a career soldier coming to Jesus in Capernaum. And he was **imploring Him, 6and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented."** Now again we just observe that the centurion addresses Him as **Lord** just as the leper addressed Him as **Lord**. It was a title of respect but something more seems intended because, as Glasscock says, "He apparently believed something divine and unique was resident in the Person to whom he appealed for a miracle." And just as with the leper it was not a matter of whether He could heal but whether He would heal. And I keep pointing this out because what Jesus could do was well-known. That's what makes their rejection of Him in Matt 12 so egregious.

Now who is the centurion's **servant**? I bring it up because the word *παῖς* can refer either to a young boy or a servant. If it was the centurion's own son then a deep family connection exists. In the Luke account, however, *δουλος* is used and so the paralytic was "a slave." So the use of *παῖς* reveals that the slave was dear to the centurion, we would say he was a favorite servant.

Now the condition of the slave is stated to be of **lying paralyzed at** the master's **home** and in severe pain. We don't know how much of his body was paralyzed but the condition seems to have been due to some accident and not a condition of birth since he had been a servant. Luke adds that he was near death. In response to the centurion's plea in verse 7, **Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."** Jesus' ability was not in question; what was in question was His willingness. Now we know He was willing.

However, in verse 8, **the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes,**

**and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."** There are several fantastic insights we can gain from the centurion's words. First, usually people go straight to the great faith of this man and that is certainly something we will comment on but what is rarely keyed in on is the humility of the centurion. He says, **I am not worthy.** Now this is a key because anyone who thinks that they are **worthy** to have the Lord do anything for them does not understand who they are or who the Lord is. We are not worthy in ourselves to receive anything from Him. The Jews thought they were worthy. And this explains why Jesus said **I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.** So we find this underlying attitude of humility and the second thing here is I think it's this statement that Christ is marveling at in verse 10 when he says, **"Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel."** In other words, if we ask what He meant by **great faith** I think we'll find that it was the underlying humility of this Gentile man that characterized and made his **faith...great.** Humility paves the way for faith; pride precludes faith. Third, in verse 9 the source of the great faith is related to this man's occupation as a centurion. He says, **For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."** The centurion understood authority orientation. He understood hierarchy and rank. It was part of the military mold from which he was cast. There was no need for Jesus to come, if He but spoke the word surely His servant would be healed. That is the way it works in the military and that is the way the centurion sees Jesus; as one sitting at the head of the military and in command of all human conditions.<sup>6</sup> Fourth, in verse 10, **when Jesus heard this He marveled.** Now only twice in the Gospels does Christ marvel at anyone; once at a Jew for his unbelief and once at a Gentile for his belief. This is a telling response and a stinging rebuke. Toussaint says, "For the Lord to commend the faith of the Gentile above any which He had found in Israel was a severe rebuke to the Jew."<sup>7</sup> Fifth, in verse 11 we see that many Gentiles will partake of the kingdom when many from Israel will not. He says, **I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** What's Jesus' point? Who are the **many** who **will come from east and west?** Gentiles. He's looking at two of the directions of the compass as synecdoche, parts for the whole, and referring to the whole Gentile world. His point is that Gentiles will be included in the kingdom. They're going to **recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.** What does it mean to **recline at the table?** Toussaint says, "The verb "to recline" (*ανακλινω*) in verse eleven suggests a banquet, a term often used by the Jews to characterize the promised blessings of the prophesied kingdom."<sup>8</sup> The Messianic kingdom is always characterized as a banquet because it's a time of great joy and relaxation. It is not a part of the kingdom but is the kingdom itself. This kingdom was covenanted to **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.** For one to be a Jew he must be a descendant of all three of those men! Gentiles are those who cannot claim descent from all three. However, they can become partakers of the kingdom. How? By having a faith like the Gentile centurion. Jesus here does more than

hint at the expectation of a postponement of the kingdom during which many Gentiles will come to faith so as to qualify to enter the kingdom. **But**, note the contrast, **but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** So by contrast, who are **the sons of the kingdom?** The Jews. Who are they? The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were the natural recipients of blessing under the Abrahamic covenant in the kingdom to come. What did they believe was necessary to kingdom inclusion? Being physical descendants of Abraham. What had John said earlier to the Pharisees and Sadducees? "Do not think that you can say, we have Abraham for our Father, for I tell you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham." So instead of being in that kingdom with all of its joy and relaxation where are they going to be? **Cast out into the outer darkness.** What does this expression mean? **Cast out into the outer darkness?** It means kingdom exclusion. Those who are excluded from the kingdom. Where is this place? Sheol. In that place there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth.** Recently some expositors have tried to say that these descriptions are not necessarily related to missing the kingdom but only being excluded from part of the kingdom or a wedding banquet within the kingdom. But I find that no amount of tortured exegesis can come to that conclusion. To be cast out into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth signifies an unsaved condition and therefore millennial kingdom exclusion. The statement that they are **sons of the kingdom** means nothing more than the truth that the Jews are the natural recipients of the kingdom blessing, being the covenant people. Contextually, since Jesus had not found such great faith as this Gentile centurion in all Israel it is saying that though the Jews were sons of the kingdom they would not enter the kingdom. Why would they not enter? Because they did not have faith in Him. Whether Jew or Gentile the condition on the human side for entrance into the kingdom is always the same, faith. They did not have what this Gentile had so he would have joy and relaxation in the kingdom but they would have **weeping and gnashing of teeth** in Sheol.

Verse 13, **And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment.** It didn't take five hours for him to rise from his paralysis. He was able to immediately rise and walk about pain free. This man had faith and faith is humble dependence upon another. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Those who come to Him in the way of the centurion, saying **I am not worthy**, are the children of Abraham.

Alright, what does this second miracle show? It shows that Jesus is predicting Israel's rejection of Himself and His ability to cleanse Israel and in light of that rejection the kingdom would be postponed and a time of great Gentile faith would ensue. Toussaint says, "It is...interesting to observe that the Gentile follows the Jew in the sequence of healing events. This is in accord with Matthew's plan of presenting Jesus first as Son of David and then as Son of Abraham."<sup>9</sup> David was a Jew, Abraham was a Gentile. Pentecost agrees with this scheme saying, "This paragraph is a remarkable foreshadowing of

the setting aside of the nation Israel because of unbelief. It shows the extension of the message of salvation to multitudes of Gentiles who would believe and have their part with the faithful in Israel in the kingdom."<sup>10</sup> The question then is, is God done with Israel? Does Israel get one offer and then by virtue of rejection God rejects them? May it never be! After the time of Gentile salvation the third miracle indicates a restoration of the Jews, for here we find the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, a Jewess.

Verse 14, **When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever.** Here we have sickness, which they interpreted as disease, and a few verses later demons. These miracles are lumped together. Do disease and demons have any place in the kingdom? No. Disease will be eliminated and demons will be locked away. First the disease, in verse 15, **he touched her hand, and the fever left her;** He didn't have to touch her but He did. What was the result? **And she got up and waited on Him.** Why that note? To show instant restoration. Instantly she was restored to wellness and went right back to work. Second the demons, in verse 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.** There was tremendous demonism in the first century and with a mere word he cast them out. Additionally, all those who were ill were healed. This shows that not all illness is a result of demon possession since the two are treated distinctly. We mention that in passing because some groups link all illness to demon possession. We undo the link. Verse 17, **This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES."** The Isaiah quote comes from where? Isa 53, the suffering servant. When was Isa 53 to be fulfilled in a literal way? On the cross. This is a reference to the cross. When will it be applied to Israel? When they believe at the Second Coming and arrival of the kingdom. So why does Matthew say it was fulfilled prior to the cross? Because these miracles were a foretaste of what will happen when the cross is applied to Israel at the Second Coming. All sickness will be removed.

In conclusion, what have we seen? **The first group of miracles lay out the kingdom program in general. The first miracle is the King's cleansing of the leper. This miracle signified that the King could cleanse all Israel if they would merely receive Him as their King. This would make them fit to dwell in His presence. However, in light of the rejection the second miracle is the King's healing of the Gentile centurion's servant. This miracle signified that the kingdom program would be postponed and a time of great Gentile faith would ensue. Finally, the third miracle is the King's healing of Peter's mother-in-law; this miracle signified that after the time of great Gentile faith Israel would be restored to enjoy the kingdom. The other miracles mentioned in passing show that He is fully capable of bringing in kingdom conditions of eliminating disease and demons. This exact kingdom program is laid out by the apostle Paul later in Romans 11 where he discusses Israel, then the Gentiles and finally a return to Israel. This is dispensational premillennialism.**

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<sup>1</sup> Toussaint, *Behold*, p 122.

<sup>2</sup> Glasscock, *Matthew*, p 184.

<sup>3</sup> That's how diseases are and that's why they stuck these people outside the camp, isolated from the community because some of them were contagious and so there is a doctrine of not going around infecting everyone when you get sick.

<sup>4</sup> Just as an aside, the spots on the skin in Lev 13-14 are the background for a passage like James 1:27. What's James 1:27 say, "keep yourself unspotted by the world." What's James saying? Don't pick up impure spiritual things from the world. It's a fallen word and there are all kinds of spiritual diseases you can pick up. It's a warning. Be careful how you walk. Be careful what you expose yourself too. And what's the other one this gives background for in Ephesians 5:27? Paul is talking about the Christ and the Church and he says of Christ, "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing..." Having no spot. That's looking at the fact that finally we're going to be resurrected spotless, perfect, like a bride on her wedding day, pure so we can dwell with Him forever.

<sup>5</sup> There was one Gentile who was cured and that's in 2 Kgs 5. Naaman. He was the Aramean captain, a great warrior and Elisha cured him. But in Israel not one person was ever cured of leprosy. It was viewed as an incurable disease.

<sup>6</sup> We might be prompted to think of the so-called problem of evil in this association. Jesus can clearly remove the problem of evil, all suffering and pain, but ultimately the removal is conditioned on Israel's favorable response to the Messiah. This is not stated in anti-Semitic tome but as a fact of biblical teaching.

<sup>7</sup> Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 123-24.

<sup>8</sup> Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 124.

<sup>9</sup> Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 124.

<sup>10</sup> Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 191.