

Lesson Eight—Matthew 8

Follow Me—For I Have Authority and Compassion

Introduction

In Scripture numbers often have meaning. The number three often symbolizes God. The number ten often symbolizes completeness. For example, the Ten Commandments are the complete revelation of God's will.

Matthew uses the number ten in chapters 8 and 9. Recall that at the end of chapter 4, God had called his disciples and promised to make them "fishers of men." Then in the next three chapters, he began to fulfill his promise by telling them how they should live in his kingdom and how they were blessed as members of it.

Looking ahead to chapter 10, we see that Jesus sends his 12 disciples out to practice working as fishers of men. But before he can do that, he must prepare them more. This he does in chapters 8 and 9.

The ten miracles Matthew records in these two chapters give Jesus' disciples and us a complete picture of his own ministry as the great King. He follows his mighty words in the Sermon on the Mount with mighty actions. The disciples will have all they need to begin serving their Lord in his harvest field.

8:1-4 Jesus heals a man with leprosy

Verse 2 Why do you think Matthew first records the healing of a leper?

Verse 3 What theme of Jesus' ministry is introduced with the words "I am willing"?

What lesson is there in the word *immediately*?

Verse 4 Why did Jesus tell the man to go and show himself to the priest?

Why did Jesus tell the man not to tell anyone about his healing?

8:5-13 Jesus heals a centurion's servant

Verse 5 Why do you think Matthew records this healing second? (See verses 10 to 12. Also see Ephesians 3:6.)

Verse 9 What great confession of faith did the centurion make when he spoke about his authority over his own servants?

8:14-17 Jesus continues to heal the sick

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Verse 14 The next miracle Matthew records is an act of mercy performed on a woman. Following the pattern we have established in the first two miracles, can you guess why this miracle may have been recorded next?

8:18-22 Jesus' words to two prospective disciples

Verse 20 Based on what Jesus said, what do you think this man was thinking when he pledged to follow Jesus?

Verse 22 Doesn't Jesus sound a bit harsh in his answer to the second prospective disciple? What point was Jesus making in his answer?

8:23-27 Jesus calms the storm

Verse 24 Why could Jesus sleep through a storm like that?

Why weren't the disciples sleeping through the storm?

Verse 27 What comfort does this miracle give you?

8:28-34 Jesus heals the two demon-possessed men

Verse 29 What does this verse tell us the demons know about Jesus? about their own future?

Verse 31 The fact that there were pigs in the area should not surprise us. Pigs were unclean for Jews, but this area was east of the Sea of Galilee and outside Jewish territory.

The fact that the demons were content to go into the pigs, and then caused the pigs to run into the lake, tells us something about the mentality of demons. What is their will for those whom they influence?

Verse 32 What power does Jesus display here? What comfort is there in this for us?

How does this chapter help us understand the kingdom of God and our ministry?

Summary

In the first five miracles, Jesus shows his authority as the King of Israel; he shows that his kingdom extends to all and that it is a kingdom of grace and compassion. We have been called to work in his kingdom.

For next time

Use The People's Bible commentary on Matthew to review this chapter. Read through Matthew chapter 9 several times.