

As further evidence that Jesus is the Messiah, Matthew presents us with a series of occasions when Jesus exercised His power over sickness and demonic spirits. He quotes Isaiah 53:4 to show that by doing these things Jesus was fulfilling the role that the Messiah was predicted to fill: *“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...”*

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<sup>1</sup> When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

Jesus has been on the mountain preaching what has been called “the sermon on the mount” (Matt. 5:1) and has made an impression on the crowds of people (Matt. 7:28-29 <sup>28</sup> *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: <sup>29</sup> For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”*). After concluding His sermon Jesus has come down from the mountain and the great crowds of people who have become fascinated with Him are following.

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<sup>2</sup> And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. <sup>3</sup> And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

**“And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped [to kneel in reverence] him”** – According to the Law of Moses, lepers were to dress in a certain way to make it obvious to others that they were lepers and cry “Unclean! Unclean!” when other people were around (Lev. 13:45 *“And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.”* Despite these restrictions, this leper comes to Jesus with his need. Mark says the leper came and knelt (Mark 1:40) and Luke says that the leper “fell on his face” (Luke 5:12).

**“saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean”** – This leper does not question Jesus’ ability to heal him; he merely says that Jesus only has to decide to do it. He is asking for Jesus to show compassion and cleanse him of his leprosy.

**“And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him”** – Leprosy in that day was a very contagious skin disease, which is why God gave Moses the instructions for lepers to keep themselves separated from other people. To reach out and touch a leper would seem to be a very foolish thing to do and yet Jesus does not hesitate to stretch out a compassionate hand to touch this man, proving His power over disease.

**“saying, I will; be thou clean”** – No doubt there was compassion in the voice of Jesus when He said “I will” as He reached out and touched the man. It’s unclear (and probably irrelevant) if the healing was a result of the command “be thou clean” or the touch.

**“And immediately his leprosy was cleansed”** – The healing power of Jesus was greater than the contagious nature of the leprosy and the man was immediately healed rather than Jesus becoming defiled or infected by the leprosy.

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<sup>4</sup> And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

**“And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man”** – We can make an educated guess as to why Jesus would try to limit the publicity that His healings would cause. It seems that He was concerned that such publicity about the healings would interfere with His preaching ministry, which we can see when we read Mark’s version of this healing: **Mark 1:45** *“But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.”*

**“but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded”** – In Leviticus 14 there are explicit instructions for the priest to follow in the diagnosis of leprosy and the verification that a leper has been cleansed from it. Any leper whose leprosy had been cured had to show himself to the priest so that he could be examined to verify that the leprosy was indeed gone. Once the priest was satisfied the ex-leper was required to offer specific offerings to thank God for his healing.

**“for a testimony unto them”** – Most commentators accept that the testimony was for the priests as a witness of the healing power of Jesus. Apparently Jesus wanted the priests to have no excuse for not recognizing His healing abilities. As religious leaders, the priests should have recognized the healing as evidence that Jesus was the Messiah and yet they still rejected Him.

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<sup>5</sup> And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, <sup>6</sup> And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. <sup>7</sup> And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

**“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum”** – Capernaum was a town built on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee and had become the home base of Jesus when He was in Galilee, likely staying in Peter’s house.

**“there came unto him a centurion, beseeching [to beg or plead] him”** – A centurion was an officer in the Roman army in command over 100 soldiers. In the parallel account in Luke 7:1-10, we discover that this centurion had sent Jewish elders to ask for Jesus’ help. It is worth noting that this Gentile, who was likely raised with pagan beliefs, had apparently believed in the God of the Jews and was now humbly appealing to Jesus for help. Luke’s account gives us a clue indicating the man’s attitude toward the Jews and their faith: *“For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.”* (Luke 7:4).

**“And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy [paralyzed], grievously tormented”** – Under Roman law a master had the right to kill his slave if he could no longer perform the duties required of him but this centurion instead chose to seek healing for this servant. Luke’s account tells us that this servant was dear to him (Luke 7:2) and so it was obvious that this centurion did not want to see this servant die. The servant was paralyzed and the expression “grievously tormented” may not necessarily mean he was suffering pain but that he was in a bad situation. Luke says that he was nearing death (Luke 7:2).

**“And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him”** – Jesus immediately and compassionately agrees to come and heal the servant. Luke’s account says that Jesus had gone with the centurion’s messengers to heal the servant but was stopped before He arrived at the house when the centurion sent more messengers to meet Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. <sup>9</sup> For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*.

**“The centurion answered”** – Matthew’s account is abbreviated but Luke tells us that the centurion sent friends to intercept Jesus and give Him a message (Luke 7:6).

**“and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof”** – According to Jewish tradition, any Jew who entered a Gentile’s home became ceremonially unclean, which is why the Jews would not enter the house of Pilate at the trial of Jesus (John 18:28). The centurion understood this and humbly considered himself unworthy as a Gentile to ask Jesus to come under his roof and suffer the inconvenience of becoming ceremonially unclean and thus become unable to take part in religious observances until He had been cleansed.

**“but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed”** – The centurion expresses his confidence that Jesus does not have to be present in order to heal the servant but only has to speak the command and it would be done.

**“For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me...”** – The centurion points out that, as an officer in the Roman army, he understands how authority works. As an officer he knows that a person in authority can issue commands and those under his authority have to obey. He recognizes that Jesus had authority over any disease and could command it to be healed, even from a distance.

<sup>10</sup> When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

**“When Jesus heard it, he marvelled [surprised; amazed; to have admiration]”** – How could Jesus be surprised since He is God? Of course, God cannot be surprised but Jesus had taken upon Himself the limitations of human flesh and lived His life as a man filled with the Holy Spirit and totally dependent on His Father. As a man, Jesus could be tired, hungry, thirsty, and even surprised at times.

**“and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”** – Jesus was so impressed by the faith that this centurion was exhibiting that He had to comment on it to those around Him, some of whom were likely the Jews who had brought Him the centurion’s messages. The people of Israel ought to have the strongest faith in God and yet this Gentile had greater faith than anyone that Jesus had encountered in Israel.

<sup>11</sup> And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>12</sup> But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The expression “from the east and west” indicates people from the whole world outside of Israel. Jesus is declaring that there will be Gentiles with faith in Him who will be able to enter and enjoy the blessings of the Messianic kingdom along with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (the patriarchs of the Jewish race). That statement was surprising enough to the Jews listening, but then Jesus follows it up with the even more shocking statement that there will be “children of the kingdom” (Jews by bloodline) who will be excluded from the kingdom. The references to “outer darkness” and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” mirror the references to hell that Jesus uses in other places (Matt. 25:30; Luke 13:28). Because entrance into the kingdom is based on faith and not bloodline, there will be some Gentiles included in the kingdom and some Jews excluded. The Apostle Paul speaks of the superiority of faith over bloodline by contrasting Isaac and Ishmael as sons of Abraham: **Romans 9:6-8** “*6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: 7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*”

<sup>13</sup> And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Jesus returns a message to the centurion through the friends that he had sent to Jesus saying that he would receive according to his faith. God does not reward unbelief and many times we limit God’s involvement in our lives because of our lack of faith. When Jesus returned to Nazareth to teach, many did not believe in Him and He was not able to minister as He would have liked: **Matt. 13:58** “*And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*”

<sup>14</sup> And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever. <sup>15</sup> And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

**“And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house”** – Peter lived in Capernaum and Jesus seems to have spent a lot of time in Peter’s home.

**“he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her”** – The accounts of Mark and Luke (Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39) say that Jesus was told of Peter’s mother-in-law (she was likely in a private part of the house) and Luke says that it was a “great fever.” Her illness was apparently severe enough that she was laid up in bed and yet all it took was for Jesus to touch her and she was cured.

**“and she arose, and ministered unto them”** – It usually takes some time to regain one’s strength after a severe fever breaks. However, when Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law she immediately felt strong enough that she wanted to minister to Jesus and His disciples, likely to show her gratitude for being healed.

<sup>16</sup> When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick: <sup>17</sup> That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

Apparently the news that Jesus was in town and that He had healed Peter’s mother-in-law had gotten around and so many people saw the opportunity to have the sick healed and those possessed with devils rescued from their predicament. Matthew points out that by doing these things Jesus was fulfilling the Messianic prophecy written in Isaiah 53:4-5.