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Never Was Anything Like This Seen (Matthew 9)

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Jesus completes a cycle of ten miracles, healing a paralytic man brought to him, restoring the woman with the issue of blood, raising a girl, healing two blind men, and delivering a mute demon-possessed man. He also teaches concerning the nature of his ministry.

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Transcript

Welcome back to this, the tenth in my series on the Gospel of Matthew. Today we're looking at chapter nine of the Gospel, in which we see the conclusion of the series of ten, or according to some reckonings, nine miracles that Jesus performs. In the first five, we studied last time, we saw the cleansing of the leper, the healing of the centurion's servant, the healing of the fever of Peter's mother-in-law, the calming of the storm, the casting out of the demons from the two Gadarene demoniacs.

And now we're moving into chapter nine, where we have the healing of the paralytic, the raising of a dead girl, and the healing of a woman with the issue of blood, giving two blind men their sight, and the casting out of the demon from a dumb man. As I discussed

in the last episode, they seem to come in a sequence of threes. So there is three, then there's a time for teaching concerning discipleship, and there's a new pattern of three, so more teaching concerning discipleship, and then a final cycle.

And that cycle has two particular events that are connected together, which is why, according to some reckonings, it might be nine instead of ten. The first miracle of chapter nine, the healing of the paralytic, is an event that ends the second cycle of miracles. And in this cycle, there's a lot more attention given to people's response, their reaction of fear or wonder to Christ, and the question of Jesus' authority is emphasised, and opposition starts to emerge.

So in the first cycle, we didn't have any responses to Jesus being highlighted. We had signs of faith towards Christ, but no responses after the miracles had occurred. Whereas in the second cycle of miracles, those responses become very important.

And in the final cycle of miracles, which we'll get to in a moment, Jesus' fame spreads even further. Now this block of miracles, these ten miracles, aren't just a sort of grab bag of stuff that Jesus did, but like the rest of Matthew, it's a progressively building argument presenting a case for the identity and the authority of Christ, and it moves the larger story forward. We'll see in a number of these cases that the healings or the miracles or the events of deliverance or raising from the dead, whatever they are, that occur, they're signs of something greater that Christ is doing in Israel at the time.

And it's important to pay attention to that bigger picture that's emerging here, and not just get lost in the details of an individual healing account. So the first event that begins this chapter is the sixth in the cycle. It's the healing of the paralytic.

Jesus returns to his own city from the land of the Gadarenes, where he's been at the end of the previous chapter, and from chapter 4 verse 13, we know that this is the city of Capernaum, that Christ had made that his base of operations. And the paralytic is carried to him by others on a bed. And there's a sign of great faith here.

In the other gospels, we hear that they cut a hole in the roof to let him down. But the scenic details are far slighter in Matthew than they are in, for instance, Mark or Luke. But there are details within these accounts of these miracles that aren't found in the other gospels and are significant in their own right.

Jesus responds to the faith of the people who bring the paralytic to him by declaring the sins of the paralytic man forgiven. That's an interesting thing to observe for a number of reasons. First of all, we'd expect him to heal the paralytic man, but he declares his sins forgiven.

He doesn't actually heal him from his paralysis. The other thing that's interesting is it's on account of the faith of the people bringing the paralytic to him that he forgives the

sins of the paralytic in particular. Or perhaps it's the faith of all of them.

But it is a strange thing. We'd expect either all of them to be forgiven their sins, or we would expect just the paralytic to be healed, or the paralytic to be healed and forgiven of his sins on account of his own personal faith. But that's not what we see.

We've already seen an association between faith and Jesus's work in the encounter with the centurion. Jesus challenged concerning his disciples lack of faith in the calming of the storm account. And then we see another couple of examples later on in this chapter in the healing of the woman with the issue of blood and in the healing of the two blind men.

And the faith in these cases is important. It's a faith that looks to Christ for deliverance, that trusts him as the one that's going to treat whatever issue it is that is afflicting the person. And in the healing of the woman, we'll see that this is seen in the practical act of touching the hem of his garment, the tassel of his robe.

In the case of the blind men that they come to him, in the case of the centurion, his faith that if Christ would just say the word, his servant would be healed. So even though he's not going to press Christ to go under his roof, he recognizes the authority of Christ. And in each of these cases, there's an implicit or tacit recognition of the authority and the power of Christ and are looking to him for deliverance.

And these people don't come with any pretensions of their own or confidence in themselves. They don't have anything to commend them. It's more the fact that they're looking completely and unreservedly towards Christ, that he is the one that can deliver them.

In the centurion's case, we see that Jesus declares that such faithful people of the Gentiles would sit with the patriarchs in the kingdom. And in this case, Jesus declares the paralytic that his sins are forgiven him. And in both cases, we see that the faith that is a practical dependence upon and trust in Christ and belief that he has authority to do these things, that that is rewarded not just with physical healing, but with something greater than that, the forgiveness of sins, and with a place in the kingdom.

It's a sign that the faith that's being spoken of, first of all, it's a very practical faith. This isn't a very theological faith. It's based upon a tacit confidence that Jesus has the authority to do these things, that he can deliver, that he is willing to deliver.

But the faith in question is one that has a theological significance. It is something that is saving on account of that practical confidence in Christ. I think that's something that can be assuring for us.

We often can think about faith maybe too much in terms of knowledge and not enough in terms of that practical confidence that reaches out to Christ, that pushes against all obstacles, and believes that he's willing and able to do for us what we need to have

done, that he's willing to forgive us our sins, that he's able and willing to deliver us from our afflictions, that he's able and willing to have us sitting alongside him in his kingdom. And in all these ways, I think we see a vision of soteriology emerging from Matthew's gospel. This is a theology that's connected deeply with the kingdom work of Christ.

So it's connected with this specific work that Christ is doing in restoring Israel and establishing the reign of God. And the response to that must be one of faith, a faith that is connected to confidence in the power and the authority of Christ himself as the king of the kingdom. It's also a faith that will yield the sort of righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.

It's a faith that will fulfill the law and the prophets. And so the appearance of faith within these accounts of miracles is not unimportant. It's a matter of the picture that needs to be taken into account.

Again, we need to consider the healing and forgiveness on account of the faith of others. This is maybe not something we think enough about, but if, for instance, we practice the baptism of children, we recognize that God does bless people and God does receive people on the basis of the faith of others. And there is an importance, I think, in these events, that in a number of the events of miracles and the scriptures, particularly in the gospels, we see people being blessed, even the spiritual blessing of the forgiveness of sins, in association with the faith of others.

Now, I think one of the other things we should think about in that context is the importance of praying for others, that we bring people, like the paralyzed man, even if they can be paralyzed in various respects by unbelief, by some sort of other inability, that by disability, by reason of infancy, whatever it is, we can bring these paralyzed people to Christ and seek, beseech, that Christ would act on their behalf, that he would deliver them. And I think that sort of confidence, that sort of trust in Christ, that practical faith is rewarded. And this is a passage that I've looked to on a number of occasions myself, that this is something that we can look to as a source of confidence and warrant to bring these people to Christ and to pray on other people's behalf.

When we're coming to Christ, we should also bring other people to Christ, people who may not bring themselves, but we should be those who take them to Christ. The scribes respond to this by thinking that he's blaspheming, he's claiming a prerogative that's God's alone, and God alone can forgive sins. And Jesus can read the hearts of men, so he recognizes what their thinking is, that they're opposing what he's doing, that they believe that he's blaspheming, that he's claiming what belongs to God.

And so as a demonstration of his authority, again consider how strange this is, that Jesus doesn't immediately heal the man, but he delays the healing of the man. He deals with the fundamental problem of sin and forgiveness, and he heals him in that way by forgiving him his sins. And then as a demonstration of his authority, if he can heal the

man, then that's a demonstration that he does have the authority to forgive sins.

It's a demonstration, as it were, that God proves in the fact that this miracle can take place, that he really does have the power to forgive sins. It's a two-stage healing as well. There's an inward healing, the healing of forgiveness, and then there's the outward healing, the healing of his paralysis, the bodily healing, and the state of his relationship with God.

That's healed as well. Once again, Jesus speaks of himself as the Son of Man. He's acting in a particular capacity or office here.

The Son of Man is a human figure of eschatological significance. We see this in Daniel, we see it in places like the books of Enoch, and perhaps he can be seen as a sort of uber prophet or messenger or some representative of God. And that language of Son of Man is used in the book of Ezekiel extensively, in reference to Ezekiel himself.

So maybe we can see Christ as a sort of exalted prophetic figure. Now many people have argued here that Jesus forgives sins as proof that he is God, and I think that's short-circuiting the case that the Gospels actually present for Christ's divinity. The response of the crowd is important to notice here.

What they respond with is not, this man must be God, but God has this great authority, the authority to forgive sins. But here we see a man exercising it, one who is truly man. And so they glorify God who had given such authority to man.

Now we can think back over the story of the Bible and see in a number of cases people like Moses, people like Elijah and Elisha, great prophets who have authority given to them. They act and they perform miracles, not always by praying to God to do something, and even they seem to act by an authority that God has given to them or vested in them. And that is the same sort of thing that we're seeing here I think, this model of understanding for the crowd.

The crowd will think that Jesus is a greater than Elijah. Elijah had the authority to stop the rain for a period of time. As a faithful man he could, there was a sense of prayer there assumed, as we see in the book of James.

And other events such as the confrontation on Mount Carmel, calling down fire from heaven, other things where, and the miracles of Elijah even more so, that it's not necessarily clear that he prays to God as part of this. Rather he's acting with a divinely vested authority and Christ is a greater than these. And he's a man, a true man, who's wielding authority that hitherto has only belonged to God alone.

And so as a man he's forgiving sins. And I think that's important. It's not just as God that he forgives sins.

He forgives sins as man, as the son of man. After this we have the call of Matthew. Jesus passes on and he sees a man called Matthew, the man who will ultimately be associated with this gospel.

He's sitting at the tax booth, he's a tax collector, and he says follow me. We've already seen a couple of these accounts in the calling of Peter and Andrew and James and John earlier on in chapter four, but now there is a calling of someone who's an even more marginal figure than Galilean fisherman might be. Here we have a tax collector.

A tax collector was someone who was collaborating and compromising with the Romans and characterized often by injustice, by taking more than was their due, and they were dealing with Gentiles and an imperial oppressor at that. So these were not the sorts of people that you want to have in a redefined Israel, but yet Christ is redefining Israel and including people like the tax collectors around the meal table. Note it's not just Matthew that joins him in the meal table, but many tax collectors and sinners.

So as Matthew is welcomed as one of the, as ultimately one of the disciples, one of the apostles, you have a larger group of tax collectors and sinners that join him. Now he's reclining at the table here and there's a redefining of Israel as if around the meal table. Throughout the gospels, maybe particularly Luke, Jesus eats lots of meals and talks about meals, banquets of the kingdom and wedding feasts that kings invite people to, and talk about the way that you act when you're invited to a feast.

Do you sit in the place of honour or how do you conduct yourself in relationship to others? How do you dress? All of these questions because the kingdom is redefined around a wedding feast. Earlier on we've seen in the centurions story that many will come from the east and the west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of kingdom will, the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Now we see another situation where there's people reclining at table and the question of who's in and who's out. Now it's not just the gentiles coming from the east and the west and reclining at table with the patriarchs, it's tax collectors and sinners eating with Christ and there there is a scandalized response from the pharisees because the pharisees were very much about pure table fellowship, about maintaining Israel's pure status, its distinction by table purity among other things and so the pharisees come into the picture here. Note that this is taking place in the house, we're not specified what house it is but it might be seen, I would say it's most likely symbolically connected with the church.

We can take it in that sort of sense the pharisees come into the picture here and they challenge Christ, why does your teacher, through his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners and Christ hears it and his response is those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice for I come, came not to call the righteous but sinners.

Now that response is one that alludes to or cites Hosea chapter 6 verse 6 and if we read Hosea chapter 6 to that point we'll see that it's quite an appropriate verse to reference in that context of that dispute from verse 1. Come let us return to the Lord for he has torn us that he might heal us he has struck us down and he will bind us up after two days he will revive us on the third day he will raise us up that we may live before him let us know let us press on to know the Lord his going out as a sure as the dawn he will come to us as the showers as the spring rains that water the earth what shall I do with you oh Ephraim what shall I do with you oh Judah your love is like a morning cloud like the dew that goes away early therefore I have hewn them by the prophets I have slain them by the words of my mouth and my judgment goes forth as the light for I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

This isn't the only time within the gospels that Jesus quotes this verse we find it also just a few chapters later in chapter 11 where he says um if I remember correctly no I seem to have missed it um or in chapter 12 where he's challenged concerning the sacrament the um sabbath and he says I tell you something greater than the temple is here and if you had known what this means I desire mercy and not sacrifice you would not have condemned the guiltless for the son of man is lord of the sabbath so there's a framework for understanding what Jesus is doing in the entire law here it's an alternative between sacrifice and mercy and we see this playing out in the rest of the gospel in chapter 12 verse 7 but also in chapter 23 verse 23 where Jesus says to the scribes and pharisees woe to you scribes and pharisees hypocrites for you tithe mint and dill and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law justice and mercy and faith these you ought to have done without neglecting the others Jesus is dealing with the situation of Israel which is analogous to that situation that's described in hosea israel needs to be healed it needs to be bound up it needs a physician and a physician comes to heal the sick and Christ has come to sinners to tax collectors to outcasts to those who recognize their state of sickness and he's healing them and taking that background of hosea 6 we also see this is a restoration of Israel he's reforming Israel around the table this is not just individual repentance God is reforming the people in Jesus Christ this is a contrast between two paradigms of the law the first paradigm is defined by mercy blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy that mercy is something that frames and refracts every single aspect of the law so you see it in terms for instance of Jesus teaching that the law when fulfilled its true righteousness the righteousness that's greater than that of the scribes and the pharisees it's a righteousness that fulfills the law it's a righteousness that doesn't merely avoid doing what's wrong or breaking things but it sets right what is broken it's a righteousness that is redemptive a righteousness that is restorative and in all of these ways it's characteristic of Jesus mission he's on a mission of mercy a mission to set right things that have gone wrong that starts with sick people people who realize their need of forgiveness they're in need of restoration and the disciples of John come to challenge him next and to question him concerning his lack of fasting and his disciples lack or his disciples lack of fasting so you have Jesus disciples being questioned by the

pharisees and now you have the Jesus being questioned concerning his disciples by the disciples of John they ask about why they don't fast and Jesus responds by giving this account of the wedding feast that the bridegroom is with the disciples at this point and with the wedding guests they are the wedding guests and for them to fast at this point would be inappropriate it would be failing to honour the occasion that they're celebrating the bridegroom is there they should be experiencing joy and feasting they should be enjoying his presence and here we see a theme that's maybe more pronounced in the gospel of John where John the Baptist is a friend of the bridegroom there are all these wedding themes that are going through the gospel and culminating in the meeting of the man and the woman in the garden at the end Jesus is the bridegroom and this is the first anticipation also that we have of the departure of Christ can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them and then they will fast and so there's a contrast between feasting and fasting and then this frames the next discussion which is about the contrast between the old practices the um the untrunk cloth and old garment and then the new wine and old wineskins the old wineskins i think are the old practices the practices of the tradition the practices of the law the practices of John's disciples and their way of practice and Jesus has come along he's bringing new wine his disciples are bringing new wine the wine of the kingdom of God and they just cannot be contained in the existing structures some things um they are bringing something that's new something that exceeds the existing structures and so they need new structures to place them within note that within this particular account the new wineskins and the old wineskins are both preserved that's the point that you're not just throwing away the old wineskins but rather both are preserved together and Jesus preserves both the old practices preserves both the old reality of the law he doesn't overturn and destroy that and he preserves the new practices so John the Baptist is not celebrating the feast in the same way the disciples of John the Baptist are operating within the old wineskins and they need to be preserved but Christ is coming with new wine and that new wine has to be held in new wineskins of new practices and those new practices and those old practices can exist alongside each other both are good in their own place Jesus goes on to perform two great miracles at this point and there seemed to be a um a series of events happening hot on the heels of each other while he was saying these things to them even while he's speaking about these things behold a ruler comes in and no before him saying my daughter has just died but come and lay your hand on her and she will live and so this event is connected with the a conversation concerning practices of feasting and fasting of mourning and celebrating of the bridegroom and the context of the funeral of mourning now this will help us to understand what's happening in the instance that follows again there are events that entangled here the events are happening hot on the heels of each other even as Jesus is going to follow the ruler the woman with the issue of blood and touches his garment so these two events are bound together now note Jesus has just been identified as the bridegroom and now immediately afterwards we have the healing of two women these two entangled events are not connected as closely as they are for instance in Luke

where we're told not only that the woman has been suffering from her condition for 12 years which is a detail given in Matthew but also that the girl is about 12 years of age the point being that they are both representing Israel Christ is the bridegroom he's the one with the wedding guests around him and now he's coming to raise the bride he's coming to heal the bride of her impurity and so Jesus goes to see the ruler's daughter and on the way the woman touches the hem of his garment now the hem of the garment is probably the almost certainly the tassel of his garment we go back to the old testament we'll see what that is in numbers chapter 15 the lord said to Moses speak to the people of Israel and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner and it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the lord to do them not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes which are your which you are inclined to where after so you shall remember and do all my commandments and be holy to your god i am the lord your god who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your god i am the lord your god now these tassels are stating something of Israel's holy status now if we go back to exodus chapter 28 i think we'll see a connection that these have where it says you shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it like the engravings of a signet holy to the lord note the holiness to the lord that was emphasized in numbers 15 and you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue it shall be on the front of the turban now again this is playing i think upon the hebrew words are important here the zit zit and the um the zits of this account and they're connected with each other um so these are signs of the holy status of Israel and the garments of Jesus are important throughout his ministry um we can think about the way that his garments are um changed to bright shining colors and all bright and shining in the transfiguration he's stripped of his garment later on and he has a scarlet robe placed upon him he's then stripped of that he has um other significant events with his garments in the gospel and it seems that the garments are signs of his office signs of his status and Jesus here has the corners of his garments of his garment touched by the woman why this particular part of his garment why not just his garment as such i think this particular part of it is maybe it's the particular part that stresses the holiness of the garment its symbolic holiness and its life flowing out from the garment you can think about the corners of the garment four pieces of blue tassels you can think the blue tassels what might they be connected with maybe water flowing out maybe waters from the garden of eden and you can see the connection between different garments and holy places elsewhere the tabernacle is reflected in the garments of the high priest and here the garments of the high priest have some sort of analogy in the garments of every israelite and that flowing out of life from Jesus that's represented by the tassels of his garments i think may be part of the importance of the particular part that's touched by the woman so she has a flow of blood Christ has a flow of life and there are bridal themes here as well the wing of the garment is that under which the bride was taken you can see that in various parts of scripture in a more poetic way to take someone under the wing of their garment that's corner of their garment that the tassel is on and so maybe there's bridal themes here that she touches

the corner of his garment he's been spoken of as the bride he's spoken of himself as the bridegroom who's celebrating with the wedding guests and they're eating together celebrating this anticipation of the wedding feast at the end and now you have a bridal theme and again she's 12 years suffering with this condition she seems to represent Israel itself in its impurity there's an interesting detail here that Peter Lighthouse has drawn to my attention that i've not seen before there's the incongruity of the flute players you don't have the flute players mentioned in the other gospel accounts of this incident but here when Jesus goes to the girl he comes to the ruler's house and he saw flute players and the crowd making a commotion he said go away for the girl is not dead but sleeping and they laughed at him now we do not expect to find flute players at a funeral that's not usually where you would expect them it's the themes that you'd usually expect flute players at a wedding they're usually associated with festivities of a more joyous nature but yet when we go a few chapters later i think we'll have a clue because there are themes that recur in chapter 11 many of the themes of this chapter john the baptist disciples and the question of fasting and feasting the question of eating with tax collectors and sinners and among other things we to what shall i compare this generation this is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates we played the flute for you and you did not dance we sang a dirge and you did not mourn so there's a juxtaposition of this um on the one hand playing the flute this sort of joyous celebration that's connected with a wedding feast and no one's dancing and then on the other hand playing um a dirge and no one mourning and christ's failure to play according to the expectations of that generation is an important part of that but also here the flute players are playing as if it were a wedding and yet it's a funeral it seems incongruous but it's it is actually truly a wedding well there are themes of the wedding because the bridegroom has come up the bridegroom is on the scene and he's going to bring with him not just mocking laughter but true laughter not just the flute playing that you might find at a funeral but the flute playing that you'd find at a wedding and so the wedding and dirge themes that collide at this point i think are an important part of exploring um what's taking place that christ is coming like the bridegroom to israel the bridegroom to israel that is lost in this condition of impurity that needs to be healed for 12 years and then this young girl that needs to be raised up and though the parallels between these healings that they're both women again and those of the centurion and then we can see parallels between these connections with the wedding themes and then connections also with the centurion and the at the beginning of the block of miracles so the centurion is a ruler who asks for christ to do something on behalf of a servant to go to his house and then to heal from a distance here he's asked to heal from a distance oh he's asked to go to the house and he goes and heals on behalf of someone else and then we have another thing a healing of impurity so the woman healed from the issue of blood with a touch and then the leopard that's healed with a touch as well um these block of miracles then they're not just isolated events we should read them in concert with and in sequence with each other the ninth event or maybe the eighth depending on how you count things is the healing of two blind men and again we're

seeing something about persistent faith here jesus heals straight away he could do they approach him and as he's passing on two blind men followed him crying aloud have mercy on us son of david and they're following him and they're crying out and it would seem he should pay attention to them turn around and heal them but he doesn't rather he goes into the house the house presumably is his base of operations presumably it's peter's house and that's where they probably seem to be based and peter's mother-in-law being there it's also a context that represents the broader reality of the church i suspect don't read too much into the fact that it's peter's house but i'm sure any roma catholics listening would be rather pleased with that detail when you look at what happens jesus doesn't heal them straight away he presents obstacles to them to in some sense prove faith to test their faith and they persist and they come to him when he's come into the house and he says to them do you believe that i'm able to do this and they say yes lord and then he touches their eyes saying according to your faith be it done to you so again we're seeing challenges presented but faith proving itself in response to those challenges the point of proving is not to um to prevent the faith from breaking through but to show the genuine character of the faith i think we see a similar thing to this earlier on when jesus presents that challenge to the centurion you want me to come to your house and the centurion says well i'm not worthy for you to come under my roof but you could just say the word and there be healed and my servant will be healed so that challenge to faith i think is again an important thing to note here christ can often present us with obstacles and challenges and as we push against that with a persevering faith the point is not that christ does not want us to come to him in faith the point is that christ wants to prove the genuine character of our faith and we should persevere knowing that he is good he is a god who wants to get god is a god who wants to give to us god is a god who is a good father and so we should persevere in faith the word spreads and the fame of jesus spreads abroad as it does within these concluding set of miracles despite jesus instruction that they should remain silent they spread the report and much of jesus kingdom work at this point is occurring beneath the radar of broad publicity but now it's starting to break into more public awareness think about the gospel of john where you see many of the signs are things that are works that aren't necessarily noticed by everyone or they would be known only to a few people who are very near who knew what jesus has said they're not things that necessarily involve some great pyrotechnics but rather just the power of jesus word and the trust in the efficacy of jesus word and so faith and the power christ's word are what are focused upon in those places jesus kingdom work has not yet risen to the same heights of publicity that we might to the heights of publicity that we might expect because he's doing these things more secretly he's telling people not to spread the news so much and there is a time when it will become more public but the moment it's like yeast that's going throughout the loaf as peter lightheart gives this illustration the kingdom of heaven as jesus gives the parable later on is like yeast it's something that rises up slowly and you don't necessarily perceive what's happening but yet these people as they're trusting and responding in faith to christ's word believing in the efficacy of his word his true authority and his power

and will to deliver them things are changing and things are changing in a way that you can't necessarily trace how it's changing and why exactly each situation occurs but christ is at work something's happening the kingdom's dawning the final miracle here is the healing of the demon possessed mute man and he's brought again to christ by some other party the demons cast out and the speaks and this may be seen as perhaps similar to the condition of israel israel is demon oppressed jesus goes around synagogues and there are people with demons in the synagogues this is a pretty sorry state that israel has been reduced to again think back to the story of david and saul the spirit of god comes upon david and the spirit of god departs from saul and saul is afflicted with an evil spirit israel as christ is anointed with the spirit is afflicted with evil spirits and christ the anointed of the spirit goes around freeing israel from its oppression much as david played for saul so that he would be relieved of his oppression by an evil spirit and at this point we see the climax of the theme of oppression that's been bubbling up so from the time of the casting out of the demons in the garrisons and to this point we've seen slowly opposition start to rise so first of all the opposition of the gatherings or and then we've seen the opposition of the scribes who can forgive but god alone we've seen the opposition of the pharisees that he's eating with tax collectors and sinners the questioning of john's disciples and now at this point we have this accusation that jesus is casting out demons by the prince of the demons it's a very serious statement that's made and jesus continues his mission and he carries out the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom the good news that god's reign is being established that god's kingdom is dawning and the good news is the referring i think to isaiah and these various references to the good news the gospel that's being declared that god is coming to reign amidst his people and the king gospel of the kingdom is that god is about to come to rule and the challenge there is you must repent you must ready yourself for this and also that you must like the people who respond appropriately you must reach out in faith in confidence that god is a good king who wishes to deliver you not shrink back in unbelief not accuse christ of acting by the power of the prince of the demons but acting as the king the messiah who's come to deliver his people the true david that's come to deliver saul from his oppression if only saul would accept christ describes the crowds like um sheep without a shepherd harris and helpless he has compassion upon them and that description of them like sheep without a shepherd might recall the number of statements from the old testament first of all in first kings chapter 22 when ahab is going to be killed um my kaya says that he prophesies and said i saw all israel scattered on the mountains as sheep that have no shepherd and the lord said they have no master let each return to his home in peace without having a sheep without a shepherd it's maybe a statement about the leaders of the people that they're like ahab they're like this great oppressor this one who's resisting the work of elijah and elisha and elijah and elisha are john the baptist is the elijah that's to come and jesus is the new prophet like elisha the one who performs miraculous signs multiplying loaves later on we'll see him doing a number of things that connect him with elisha his name connects him with elisha too but he's also connected with another character and that statement of being like sheep without a

shepherd's shepherd might also remind us of numbers chapter 27 let the lord the god of the spirits of all flesh appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them who shall lead them out and bring them in that the congregation of the lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd so the lord said to moses take joshua the son of nun a man in whom is the spirit and lay your hand upon him and so joshua is appointed as the leader of the people so that they would not be a sheep without a shepherd jesus the new joshua their names are the same is the one who is the true shepherd of israel he's the one that's going to lead them into the promised land and he teaches his disciples the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few pray earnestly to the lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest and that sets things up for the next chapter where the 12 apostles are called and commissioned and sent out into the harvest field sent out prepared to minister to and reap the harvest of israel all of this chapter is a culmination of this cycle of miracles healings deliverances is characterizing christ it may be seen as a sort of um the evangelist presenting some sort of um you you might see it as just a series of events in um a sort of real after each other just presenting all these things that christ is doing in sequence to give a sense of what he's about this um is the montage scene this is the um scene where you see the sorts of things that jesus is doing so there are many healings that jesus is doing but these are representative they're showing you something about who christ is and we see as as in the other gospels there are certain healings and events and miracles that are focused upon because they help us to see more deeply who christ is and as we see christ as the bridegroom as we see him as the one who's the son of man who has this who has this great heavenly authority as we see him as the one who can forgive sins who can restore those who are blind and those who are mute restore faculties to an israel that's beleaguered and oppressed by demons we are seeing something that's preparing us for everything that's going to come next jesus is now going to gather the people around him his disciples and he's going to send them out he's going to commission them to continue what he has started to do the sorts of things that he has done and once again the response of faith is going to be crucial how do we respond to this how does israel respond to this does it respond by looking to christ and confidence does it respond by bringing people to him by that confidence that he is willing and able to deliver them from their oppression from their sins forgive them and restore them or are we like israel ultimately in that in the story of the gospels going to shrink back this is the challenge to us and the way that matthew presents this is written not just to describe what happened but as a challenge to the reader a challenge to the reader to come to exercise the sort of faith of the centurion of the woman who touches the hem of christ's garment of the people who bring the paralytic to christ and as we um as we follow the example of these characters we will like them find ourselves delivered we'll find ourselves sitting with abraham isaac and jacob in the kingdom we'll find ourselves forgiven of our sins and restored to our full faculties present with christ and enjoying the benefits of his kingdom thank you very much for listening if you have any questions please leave them on my curious cat account if you'd like to support this and other videos and podcasts like it

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