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Matthew 9:27 - 9:34



Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg provides a biblical analysis of Matthew 9:27-34 and how it relates to life and faith in Jesus Christ. He discusses the various healings that Jesus performed and how they required faith from those seeking healing. Gregg notes that the power of God works through Jesus' name, but Jesus did not always want the news of his miraculous healings to spread. He also challenges the notion that all physical ailments are a result of demon possession, and instead suggests that some may be cured through spiritual remedies.

Transcript

I'm turning now to Matthew chapter 9 and verse 27, and we continue our study through this book of the Bible and through the study of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. In Matthew 9 and verse 27, Matthew writes, Now this is really just another of the many stories of Jesus' life. Jesus healed two blind men.

Now, there are several occasions in the Gospels where Jesus heals blind people, and that being so, he fulfilled what the Scriptures said the Messiah would do. Actually, in the 35th chapter of Isaiah, although it does not mention personally the Messiah being present, we have in this chapter one of the many places in Isaiah where the age of the Messiah is described, its characteristics of that age. And of course, these are throughout Isaiah implied to be the conditions that the Messiah himself would bring upon his coming.

And it says in Isaiah 35, verses 5 and 6, Now, of course, this is saying that people with eyes that can't see will be healed and will be able to see. People with ears that can't hear will have their ears healed. People who can't walk will be leaping, and people who can't talk will be singing.

Now, of course, this is speaking about healing of handicaps, including the eyes of the blind being opened. Now, Jesus certainly fulfilled this tremendously in his ministry. This is only one of quite a few cases in the Gospels that tell of Jesus healing blind people and giving them their sight.

In fact, on an occasion later than this, when John the Baptist, in prison, sent messengers to Jesus and said, Jesus said, You just tell him to put it together and figure it out for

himself. And of course, Jesus was really alluding back to this prophecy in Isaiah 35, where it spoke of these very things happening when the Messiah comes. Now, the Messiah was referred to by the Jews as the Son of David.

The reason for this is that, although David had lived and died a thousand years before Christ, it had been prophesied that when the Messiah comes, he will come through the line of David. He would be a descendant of David. And, of course, the word son in Scripture is often used in that sense of a descendant, someone maybe far more fully removed than a one generation.

And in this case, it would be at least, what, 28 generations or something like that, a very long time removed. But the point is that Jesus was descended from David, as the Messiah was supposed to be. Now, when the two blind men saw Jesus, or I shouldn't say they saw him, they heard him.

They didn't see him yet, because they were blind. They knew that it was Jesus. And their first words to him were, Son of David, have mercy on us.

Now, in calling him Son of David, they were not calling Jesus by his proper name. They were calling him by a messianic title. That is, it was the title for the Messiah.

And as such, they were saying, Jesus, we believe that you are that Son of David who was promised to come, who would be the Messiah. Now, in addition to that, of course, they would very possibly be aware of the scriptures that said that when the Messiah comes, the eyes of the blind will be opened. So they would have great reason to be encouraged that if this was the Messiah, as they were acknowledging him to be, that he might affect that miracle upon them.

And it says in verse 28, when he had come into the house, the blind men came to him. This implies that before Jesus went indoors, when he was out walking in the streets, these blind men were calling out to him. And apparently, he did not immediately stop and give them his attention.

Instead, he just proceeded on as he went and went into the house. However, the blind men continued to show interest. They were so convinced that their efforts would be rewarded that they followed him right into the house where he was lodging, or at least where he was eating or whatever he was going to do there at that time.

This is presented as an evidence of their faith. Now, do you remember earlier in this same chapter, in Matthew chapter 9, there were four men who carried a paralyzed man on a pallet and wanted to bring him to Jesus, but they were unable to get close because the room was so full where Jesus was. And so they climbed up on the roof and broke up the roof and lowered the man down to where Jesus was.

And it says of him that when he saw their faith... Now, it's interesting. He recognized

their faith in what respect? Well, of course, they had faith that Jesus could heal them or else they wouldn't have gone to that much trouble. But it's the trouble they went to that is impressive, that they were not put off.

They really believed that Jesus could heal. They believed it enough to take the risk of embarrassing themselves, of breaking up someone else's roof. I mean, they were so sure that if they went to this kind of trouble, their efforts would be rewarded, that it was a manifestation of their great faith.

Likewise, these blind men are said to have faith. Jesus said, according to your faith, be it unto you. These blind men had enough faith to persevere.

When Jesus did not seem to be giving them attention as early on as they had wished, they didn't give up and they kept pestering him. They came right into the house where he was. There's another story later on in the 15th chapter of Matthew of a woman who was a Gentile and her daughter demon-possessed.

And the daughter was not with her, but she was coming to Jesus on behalf of her daughter to seek help. And Jesus largely ignored her for a while. And then eventually she kept persisting.

She kept persevering. And finally he said, a woman great is your faith. And he healed her daughter.

So we can see that Jesus often tested faith by allowing people to have opportunity to persist if they would. You see, I think prayer is that way with us. That if we simply pray for something and then never pray for it again, we exhibit that we don't really expect that prayer to be answered, or perhaps don't care too much if it is.

But if we really care about something and we pray and persist and do not give up, and even if God seems to be silent, God seems not to be answering, we continue to pray for the thing. It is a sign of our faith. You know, some people think that if you pray for the same thing twice, it's a sign that you don't have faith.

But this is certainly not taught in Scripture. Jesus taught that we need to persist in our prayers. And really, it is a true mark of faith that we persist once God has not first answered our prayers.

If God does not immediately answer our prayers, we could easily be put off and say, well, I guess God can't or won't or, you know, I guess I'm asking out of line here. And so we just stop praying. But if we keep praying, it is a real test of our faith.

Because every time we pray again, we have the memory of the times we prayed before and didn't get the answer. And we have to overcome that. And a faith that continues to pray and does overcome that is a faith that persists and gets blessing.

And actually, there's every reason to be more believing after we've prayed several times and haven't gotten it because we're that much closer to actually seeing it. I mean, when we prayed the first time, it was in the past. And therefore, the time lag from first prayer to the fulfillment of it was greater than it is from now.

If I'm praying a hundredth time today for something that I've been praying for for a hundred days before, I'm that much closer, I'm a hundred days closer to seeing it fulfilled. And I should do so with great faith. However, we do get discouraged at times, and we should not.

And we need to keep the faith. And these blind men were in the position of men who, they're a little bit like us. When we request things from God, we can't see him because he's invisible.

Well, they couldn't see Jesus either. He was there, just like God is here, but they couldn't see him. But they had faith.

They believed that he was there and that he was able to help, and they asked him to help, and he didn't. And so they kept asking, and he didn't. And he finally went into a house, and they followed him there and asked him again.

And Jesus was impressed by their faith, we are told. They came to him, and he said, Do you believe that I'm able to do this? Obviously, they did, or else they wouldn't have kept pestering him. And they said to him, Yes, Lord.

Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, let it be to you. In other words, because you have this faith, I'm honoring it by giving you your request. Now, he touched their eyes on this occasion.

Jesus frequently touched people in healing them, but not always. And especially in the case of blind men, there are a variety of ways that Jesus healed them. On one occasion, in John chapter 9, Jesus spit on the ground and made mud out of the dust and put it in the man's eyes and told him, Go wash it out over in the pool of Siloam, and you'll be healed, and it happened just that way.

Other times we read of Jesus putting his fingers in the eyes or spitting in the eyes or laying hands on a person or doing some other thing. Jesus does not always use the same method of healing, though he did always heal the blind. When they came to him in his ministry, he didn't always heal them instantly.

There was one case of a man that was blind, and Jesus ministered to him and said, What do you see? And the man said, Well, I see men, but they look like trees walking. And Jesus touched him a second time, and then he saw all things clearly. So even though Jesus healed quite a few blind people in his ministry, he didn't really do it always the same way.

He was versatile. I think in having this variety of methods, he intended to discourage us from trusting in methods. He did not use some kind of a magic method to get people healed, and he often did innovative and creative and different things, perhaps in order to show that it is not a method that does it.

It is Jesus himself. It is the power of God through Jesus in his name that does it. Well, true to character, it says this worked.

It says, Their eyes were opened, and Jesus sternly warned them, saying, See that no one knows it. In other words, don't go and tell people this story. This is something Jesus did quite characteristically at this point in his ministry.

When he did a miracle, he would often try to avoid publicity about it. He would often tell someone, Don't tell anyone about it. The story just before this one in Matthew 9 is about how Jesus raised Jairus' daughter, a little girl, from the dead.

And yet, after he did that, he had told them, though Matthew doesn't tell us so, the parallels in the other Gospels do, he said, He sternly warned the parents not to tell anyone of it. And yet, what happened? In verse 26, it says, The report of this event went out into all the land. And when Jesus told the blind men not to tell anyone, what do we read in verse 31? But when they had departed, they spread the news about him in all that country.

Now, there's a couple questions here. One is, Why did Jesus tell them not to tell anyone? And the other is, Why is it they disobeyed him so thoroughly? Well, the first is harder to answer than the second. Why did Jesus say not to tell anyone? I know of one teacher who suggested Jesus was using reverse psychology and knew that the best way to get the news around was to tell someone not to tell anyone.

And then they would certainly go out and tell everyone they knew. If Jesus was thinking that way, it worked, because they did tell, even though he said not to. But I suspect that that is not really what Jesus was doing.

I think that Jesus was being very careful not to be self-promoting, very careful not to cause his ministry to grow because of carnal enthusiasm or because of the wrong motives or whatever on the part of people. Many people are attracted to miracles who are not attracted to discipleship. And Jesus wanted people to come to be disciples, not just to be well.

And, you know, when you spread the news that people are getting healed in a certain group of meetings, all the sick start flocking there to be healed, even if they're not interested in God. They just want their healing. And I think Jesus did not want to spread his reputation based on being reported to be the healer or the miracle worker, because many people would come just wanting a miracle or just wanting to see a miracle.

And Jesus was really wanting people to be attracted to him for other reasons. And so that probably is why Jesus did discourage people from telling these stories. He didn't want the news to spread around and just draw curiosity seekers who had no real interest in the gospel, unlike many ministers today in their motivations.

But the next question is, why didn't the people obey him? He said to not tell, and they did tell. And this I would just have to chalk up to human weakness, probably, because if you've experienced something very exciting, I mean, your daughter's raised from the dead, or you've been blind all your life and now you can see, first of all, it would be hard not to tell. It would be hard to know what to say to people who asked you, Oh, how come you can see now? How come your... I heard your daughter died, but now there she is running around.

What happened? It's difficult to know exactly how these people could have answered these questions. Although they could have said, Well, I've been sworn to secrecy. I'm not supposed to tell.

In any case, it would be, of course, very difficult to keep secret of these things. And we find that those that Jesus spoke to telling them to keep it a secret did not do so very well. In verse 32, it says, As they went out, behold, they brought him a man mute and demon-possessed.

So here's a man who cannot speak, and he has a demon. Notice, And when the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never seen like this in Israel before.

But the Pharisees said, He cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. This is not the only time they said that. They said it again in chapter 12 of Matthew.

And Jesus answers them there. He does not do so here. But this is an interesting point.

Here comes somebody demon-possessed. Now this is, of course, we've encountered this before in the Gospel. Jesus cast demons out of people on frequent occasions.

But the interesting thing about this is that this man also was incapable of speaking. And when the demon was cast out, he was then capable of speaking. It seems quite clear that his muteness, his dumbness, was a result of being demon-possessed.

Now what can we learn from that? Well, we certainly cannot necessarily deduce from that that everybody who can't speak is demon-possessed. That would be very wrong, because the Bible simply doesn't say that. It doesn't say that here.

But we could deduce from that that sometimes people who are demon-possessed are afflicted physically with something like, in this case, dumbness or some other issue. There can be some other physical issue that the demons seem to be causing. For

example, in Matthew chapter 12, in verse 22, it says, Then one was brought to him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute.

And he healed him, so that the blind and the mute man both spoke and saw. Okay, so here's a demon-possessed man. Jesus healed him by casting the demon out.

And what? He was not only mute, he was blind. Now there's a woman over in Luke. Where is she? I think she's in chapter 12, if I'm not mistaken.

I could be wrong. I think it might be 18. But anyway, this woman's bent over and can't stand up straight.

And it says she has a spirit of infirmity. And Jesus said that Satan had bound her, and he freed her. Now here we have cases of physical infirmities, which are clearly caused by spirits, by demons.

And when the demons are expelled, the symptoms are gone. Now, once again, do not think that I am saying that all persons who have disabilities are demonized. That is simply not the case.

There's very explainable physiological and organic causes for many of these sicknesses. But there are cases in Scripture, and there may well be cases today, where a person who is demonized has this as the symptom. That they are blind, or mute, or bent over, or there's a case of one who's epileptic in the Scriptures.

I don't believe that all epilepsy is caused by demons, but apparently sometimes it is, according to Scripture. And therefore, we need to realize that the symptoms of demon possession are not always what we might think. I've often had people speculate as to who is demon possessed and who is not.

And usually, when they decide that somebody is demon possessed, it's very often the case that they decide it on the basis that that person is immoral. Or that person has very wicked behavior. Well, I'm sure that that is often the case of demon possessed people.

They probably are immoral. But it's interesting that when the Bible describes demon possessed behavior, it never has anything to do with the morality of the person. It has to do with other things.

They're tormented. They're cutting themselves. They're living in the tombs.

They're screaming in inappropriate places, like the synagogue and so forth. These are the things. But there's no focus on the moral lives of these people.

So that the Bible does not indicate that the principal symptom or sign of demon possession would have to do with a person's moral character. Now, believe me, I believe that a demon possessed person is not likely to have very good moral character. But

where we think of the demons as principally interested in getting us to sin, and therefore, if they would possess a person, they'd have us sinning all the time, the Bible indicates that the demons are mainly interested in tormenting.

The woman in Matthew 15 with the demon possessed daughter came to Jesus and said, My daughter is greatly tormented by an evil spirit. The evil spirits are not necessarily there to inspire wickedness, but to torment their victims. Now, this torment can take the form, according to Scripture, of physical handicaps from time to time.

And I have seen it before. I've seen people who seem to have physiological problems, but when the demons were cast out, their problems changed, their problems were healed. And therefore, it does appear that we should not rule out demon possession as a possible explanation in some cases where there is a physical problem.

A lot of times people think, well, if you can improve the problem with medical science, then it must not have been spiritual, it must not have been demonic. But that is not necessarily a trustworthy thing to say. I mean, it is possible that we could give a medical explanation of the person's malady, but that doesn't mean that it is not a demon that has manipulated that situation.

Now, I'm not going back to the old-fashioned idea of every time you sneeze, it's a sign you're expelling demons or anything like that. And I certainly don't believe that the majority of sick people are made sick by demon possession. But we cannot ignore the testimony of Scripture.

If we want to be aware of the spiritual realm, and if we want to be agreeable with what God has sought to reveal to us about it, then we have to acknowledge, A, there are demons. B, they sometimes possess people. C, when they possess people, they torment people.

This torment can be mental or otherwise. And of course, finally, we have to decide on the basis of Scripture that this torment can be a physical malady, a physical disability. In this story that we read of, it is dumbness or muteness.

In Matthew 12, it's blindness and muteness. In another place, it's a woman bent over and cannot stand up straight. In another place, it's epilepsy.

And so we find that these different physical things are not always strictly attributable to physiological or organic causes. No doubt they usually are. But we need to consider that some people may need help of another sort.

Some people with physical problems may be suffering from that which could be cured by a spiritual remedy, namely, the casting out of demons, as in the case that we just read about. So in this place, we've read of Jesus healing two blind men, who, by the way, were not demon-possessed, although another blind man in Matthew 12 was, and healing a

mute individual. And this is just the beginning of wonders in the life of Jesus.

They fulfill the predictions of Isaiah 35, and show, of course, that he was bringing in the Messianic age of which the prophet spoke.