

Miracle 11: JESUS CLEANSSES THE SECOND LEPER

Matthew 8:1-4

Matt. 8:1-4-- 1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. 2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, 3 I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, 4 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.

The Context (8:1): Six contextual observations:

- 1) Jesus has just finished the Sermon on the Mountain (Matt. 5-7), and is followed off the mountain by a large crowd. This “context fact” helps distinguish this cleansing of a second leper from the first recorded cleansing of a leper (Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-14-miracle #7). Some students of the Scriptures say that this is describing the same miracle, but there are some clear differences that indicate to me that this is a second recorded cleansing of a leper.
- 2) First, Luke twice declares in his introduction to his Gospel accounts that he is writing these accounts “in order” (Luke 1:1-4). Thus, basing the miracle chart on Luke’s order of miracles, it puts Mark’s order of miracles and John’s order of miracles in order. The only one out of order is Matthew’s accounts. This can be explained because of Matthew’s thematic approach to what he records with his theme of Jesus Christ as King. He does not say that his recording of the miracles is in order, so this doesn’t make his gospel account inaccurate.
- 3) Second, Luke says the first leper was cleansed “in a certain city” (Luke 5:12). Matthew says that Jesus entered into the city of Capernaum after the healing of the (second) leper (Matt. 8:5) and just before the healing of the centurion’s palsied servant in Capernaum (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1--10-miracle #12). Assuming, Luke’s miracle accounts are in order, this is another indication that this is a cleansing of a second leper.
- 4) Third, Matthew’s account speaks of a large crowd (“great multitudes followed Him”) as the leper approached Jesus (Matt. 8:1). There is no large crowd mentioned in either the Mark or Luke accounts either before or after the miracle; another notable difference.
- 5) Fourth, in the Mark and Luke accounts the leper is told to tell no one, and he disobeyed (Mark 1:45; Luke 5:15); in Mathew’s account the leper was also told to tell no one and there is no indication whatsoever that he did. Thus, another significant difference.
- 6) Though there are some similarities in the accounts, these four facts lead me to the belief that these are two different leper cleansing accounts. I will address the issues of similarities in the accounts further as we get to them in this account.

The Leper’s request (8:2): Six observations:

- 1) “Behold” (Greek #2400 *idou*-- a demonstrative particle meaning behold! or look!). It is used to alert the reader to pay attention to what follows.
- 2) This leper came and “worshipped” (Greek *proskuneo* meaning to worship or do reverence to). Once again, a difference from Mark (kneeling down) and Luke (fell on his face), both which show respect but not necessarily worship. Many people knelled and fell on their
(over)

faces to kings, rulers, and other dignitaries. Many Jews believed worship should only be given to God (based on the First Commandment Ex. 20:1-3). Further, Jesus declared this truth at His temptations by Satan (Matt. 4:10).

- 3) I should not neglect to mention that the leper was breaking ceremonial law by approaching Jesus and the large crowd was probably quite surprised; appalled that the leper would approach Jesus (breaking the social distancing of six feet required by Jewish ceremonial law).
- 4) Next, the two lepers essentially say the same thing: “Lord, if thou art willing, thou art able to cleanse me.” The fact that these are essentially the same is not surprising because they both are addressing a person they consider “Lord” (though the Greek word kurios #2962 means sir, master, or lord and is used in Scripture in all three ways).
- 5) “Lord” is used in a number of different miracles, when approaching Jesus Christ. The leper acknowledged Jesus as Lord and resigned himself to the will of the Lord when he said, “If thou will.” By faith, he believed Jesus had the power to cleanse him (“thou art able to cleanse me”), but was unsure of Jesus’ willingness to cleanse him (perhaps because he considered himself as unworthy of cleansing).
- 6) In the Bible, leprosy is a type of sin and sin’s awful consequences; considered by the Jews to be a direct judgment of God. Like sin, leprosy starts very small (as a small inflammation of the skin), and grows into a devastating plague. It destroys as it grows and consumes all the flesh in its path. Like sin, leprosy separates men from men, and men from God (Lev. 13:45-46). Like sin, leprosy kills the body (eats at the body until it is consumed in death). Like sin, leprosy is a loathsome disease for a man to live with. The infected person is miserable from the oozing of the flesh, the relentless pain, and the constant discomforts. And leprosy, like sin, was an incurable disease. Victims of leprosy were totally consumed with the disease, just as we are totally depraved sinners.

Jesus’ Response (8:3a): Jesus gave a two-fold simultaneous response involving both word and action.

- 1) First, “He put forth His hand and touched him.” Jesus could have shown no greater action of love and mercy than to reach out His hand to touch this unclean leper. He touched the untouchable.
- 2) When Jesus put forth His hand and touched the leper, He showed his deity and impeccability. Jesus couldn’t be tainted with this disease of leprosy, nor be charged with being “unclean” by the demands of the law. Why not? Because Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. Jesus could not and did not sin, but took upon Himself our sin on the cross that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; I Pet. 2:22).
- 3) Second, He says, “I will; be thou cleansed” (five words in English; two words in Greek). He didn’t say, If God wills, but “I will.” Jesus lived, died, and rose again that He might say to us, “Be thou clean.”

The Miracle (8:3b): Immediately (instantly) his leprosy was cleansed. Application: Thank Jesus tonight that the same thing happens to our spiritual leprosy. Remember the song, “He touched me”

Jesus’ Commands (8:4): Four quick imperative commands: 1) Don’t tell; 2) Go thy way; 3) Show the priest; 4) Offer the gift(s) that Moses commanded. He had to go and show himself to the priests in Jerusalem and then offer the appropriate sacrifices (an eight-day process described in Lev. 14). We are not told if this leper obeyed all those commands (the first leper disobeyed). I think this leper obeyed Jesus; after all, the crowd that followed had already seen the miracle. In fulfilling the commands, he was a testimony to them (crowd, priests, etc.).