

Lesson 9: Review of Matthew 8:28-9:8: "Jesus Came to Save Sinners"

A theme running through all four gospels is that Jesus came to seek and save sinners. Here in Matthew 8:28-9:8 this is illustrated in two amazing events which took place on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel! Two great stories unfold. One occurs in a remote region just across the Sea called the Gadarenes and the other takes place in Capernaum. Jesus was on a mission. Jesus was going to save sinners. He came to "save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21)

Jesus crosses over to the Gadarenes apparently to seek and save two demoniacs. Seeking and saving was His work. In Luke 19:10 Jesus told Zacchaeus as much. He said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost." So, Jesus' mission to the Gadarenes was a mission to claim His sheep. To bring them back because, evidently, these two demoniacs belonged to Him—they were His to seek and save.

This story provides us great insight into this glorious truth that Jesus came to seek and save a particular people known to Him and to the Father (see John 17:6-10, for example). We can say this as two things become evident in the story. First, Jesus went to them; and second, the spirits possessing the demoniacs knew Jesus came to drive them out. We also can see that their helpless situation is hopeless. They were chained and bound to demons until someone strong enough could set them free! That One had come.

Do you realize that you and I were hopeless when Jesus found us? Ephesians 2:1 says that we were "dead in [our] transgressions". Just as Jesus didn't come to "try" to set the demoniacs free, so Jesus did not "try" to save us. Ephesians 2:4-5 tells us that He saves us without fail according to His great love. "But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." And, in the same Jesus was bent on saving the men possessed by demons so WE have a Savior who is bent on conquest; a Savior who will not and cannot fail to save! Why? Because He came to seek and save His Sheep (John 10:14, 27-29)!

Demons aren't stupid. The demons possessing these men knew things of the highest order. They knew what all humans need to know and fail to heed. First they knew Jesus was the Son of God. We see this in 8:29. When they first see Jesus they shout, "What do you want with us, Son of God?" In Mark 5:6 when the demons first see Jesus they come running to him falling down in submission to Him! We don't do that. In our fallen human nature we often strut right up to God with our chests puffed out making demands on Him! That is what we "do" by nature. Therefore, we need the grace of God for us to "see" Him for who He is and to truly repent in humility before Him. Jesus said in Matthew 16:17b, "for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in Heaven."

Demons aren't stupid but, take note, their knowledge didn't change them. They knew Jesus to be the Son of God but still would not repent. Knowing that Jesus is the Son of God did not change their nature. This is important for us to understand: Without a direct work of God to give us a new heart (a new nature) we too could know much about Jesus and still be dead in trespasses and sins. Does this frighten you? If so, would you cry out to God through faith in Jesus Christ asking Him to save you right now?

Let's move on to the second part of our lesson. Matthew 9:1-8 takes us back to Capernaum where Jesus heals a helpless paralytic. Oh happy day for the paralytic. He had friends who brought him to Jesus. He couldn't come to Jesus on his own. He was stuck. He was helpless. However, these friends are instruments in the Redeemers Hands! They are agents of grace for him! They brought the man to Jesus! We are like this paralytic: helpless and without hope. We are in desperate need of God's grace!

In the story we see Jesus move toward the man! We see Jesus initiate his healing. Did you notice where Jesus aimed His first work of healing? He first forgave the man of his sins! All his sins! Of course this ruffled the feathers of the religious community. They grumbled in their hearts that Jesus blasphemed by equating Himself with God by offering forgiveness! They were angry that someone was forgiven! Sinners who are forgiven don't complain about mercy and grace, do they? But these religious leaders missed the Truth! Indeed, Jesus did have authority to forgive sins!

Notice how the man was sent home! What a happy home as a "new man" walked through the door! He left home helpless and came back whole! This could be true for you today. You may be a Christian but find that you really are helpless to overcome a spiritual paralysis in your life. Would you come to Jesus, praying for His grace and mercy to help you "rise anew", free, walking a new walk, living in His grace full of joy and peace?

Jesus came to save. He still saves hopeless and helpless people! We can rejoice in our Savior!

Questions for Matthew 9:9-17: “Intentional Salvation”

As we study Matthew we must continue to hold this note: Jesus came to save sinners! This is the heart of the Gospel. Falter on this note and we lose the melody of Scripture! Indeed Jesus did come as King—a good King of a kingdom established by sacrifice and love: His self-sacrifice on behalf of sinners according to the love of God! In this lesson we will see that salvation is an intentional work of God demonstrated in the Gospels through the many works and wonders of Jesus, all leading up to the cross at the end of His earthly ministry.

1. From the notes on page 1, **A)** what impressed and/or helped you? **B)** Explain “A”.

2. Read Matthew 9:9-13. Jesus calls Matthew to follow Him. **A)** If you have access to the NIV look at 9:9. What word in the first phrase of v.9 indicates an intentional movement on Jesus’ part? **B)** He called Matthew who was a tax collector. What do you know about tax collectors at this period in history? **C)** Was Matthew looking for Jesus? Explain. **D)** How did he respond when Jesus called him? What else did he do? How are you challenged by Matthew’s joy? **E)** What objection to Jesus’ actions in 9:11 did the religious people raise? **F)** In 9:12-13 Jesus’ words were sharply pointed at the “seriously religious people. What do you think they were doing that offended Jesus, the King of the Kingdom?

3. Read Matthew 9:14-17. Jesus explains the New Life He gives. **A)** What actions of Jesus and His disciples trouble John’s disciples? **B)** How would you describe the difference in the “tone” of John’s disciples in v.14 and the “tone” in Jesus’ first explanation in v.15? Which do you prefer? **C)** Consider that John’s disciples were talking “works” in v.14 and Jesus was talking “grace” in v15. How do you see “grace” in Jesus’ words, “How can the *guests of the bridegroom* mourn while He is with them?” **D)** Looking at the story of the story of wineskins (9:16-17) how does Jesus illustrate that salvation changes our relationship with God and our identity? (notice words like “old” and “new”; and look up Ezekiel 36:26-27 for help)

4. Reread Matthew 9:9-17. **A)** Matthew’s calling and the result can be very helpful for us. Look how “grace” affected Matthew in 9:9b-10. What concrete actions did Matthew take as a direct result of his being sought and called by Jesus? **B)** What has grace done for you? How has the grace of God affected your “heart”, your “mouth”, your “home”, and your “hands”? **C)** Explain the connection between Ezekiel 36:26-27 and the illustration of the wineskins. **D)** What effect has the grace of God had on your life?