



Matthew 8:18 - 9:8 **The Authority of Jesus**

Summary: Jesus demonstrates His authority over the natural and supernatural things in this world because what He really wants to communicate is His authority over sin.

We're working our way through Matthew's gospel, learning about Jesus: who He was and where He came from in chapters 1-4; what He taught in chapters 5-7 (the famous Sermon on the Mount), and now we're looking at the miracles He worked in chapters 8 & 9.

Last week we saw Him heal 3 people – He healed many others of course, but we were given the details of three. This morning we'll see more miracles as Jesus demonstrates His power over the wind and waves, casts out demons, and heals again. But we'll also see *why* Jesus did these things and think about why we don't see more dramatic miracles happening today.

First though, we take a brief look at how some people responded to what was going on and how Jesus responded to them.

Matthew 8:18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side.

The crowds gathered because they heard His teaching and witnessed the healing. But as they gather, Jesus takes off.

That's important for us to note in a day when so many people are trying to increase the number of their followers online. Jesus didn't make a big deal about crowds. He wasn't hungry for attention. He wasn't angling to build His platform or His channel all the time. He would walk right out of a town where He was becoming popular.

Why? Because many people misunderstood Him.

That was true then and it's true today. People saw the miracles He did and they thought, "Here's someone fun and exciting to be around, somebody who can do things to help me." But they often didn't want to accept the hard things Jesus was saying about life and sin and judgment and forgiveness. They didn't always understand that the miracles weren't the point – they were pointing to the point. We'll take a look at what the point was in just a bit when we get to chapter nine.

But first, we meet two people from the crowd. One was a scribe – a well-educated religious academic or lawyer from that time.

19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

20 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.”

Now the first thing I want you to notice is how shocking this is: a scribe is willing to follow the carpenter. This is like someone with a degree from UVA or Georgetown telling a high-school dropout, “I want to team up with you.”

He calls Jesus, “Teacher¹,” or ‘rabbi’ in Hebrew. It’s a title of honor that had to be earned, but Jesus hadn’t spent time in religious schools. He didn’t have academic credentials. And yet, what He said resonated with this well-educated man.

There was something about Jesus that appealed to accomplished people. Last week we noticed a Roman centurion came to Jesus and asked for his servant to be healed. Now this scholar comes to Jesus and defers to His views. In John’s gospel we read about Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews - the equivalent of an American Senator - who came to Jesus seeking guidance. He’s the one Jesus famously told that we must be born-again in order to enter the kingdom of God and that

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

So, think about this - a political leader, a military leader, an academic all come to Jesus looking for help, hope, and guidance. I want you to see that because you already know there are smart people who dismiss Jesus, but I want you to know there are smart people who love Jesus too.

There are scientists who love Jesus and scientists who dismiss Him. There are hard-core special operations soldiers, SEALS, Battlefield Airmen, and Marines – even fighter pilots - American war-heroes who love Jesus and others who dismiss Him. There are Senators and Representatives, CEOs and CIOs, entrepreneurs and coaches; there are teenagers, millennials, Gen Xer’s, and boomers who love Jesus and others who write Him off.

I want you to know that, and not be intimidated because some man or woman with letters after their name or a title in front of their name says they don’t believe in Jesus or questions what the Bible says. I want you to know that there are others out there with the same qualifications, credentials and experience who believe just the opposite – in fact, some of them are here sitting next to you in this room. Skepticism is not a sign of intelligence or maturity; sometimes it’s an attempt to deal with a guilty conscious or sense of conviction.

I also want you to know that can join the ranks of academics, military officers and NCOs, and politicians who love Jesus. That’s the path He wants some of you on.

¹ Greek *didaskalos* – this word is the normal Greek translation for the Hebrew word *rabbi*.

When Jesus tells him “*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head*” Jesus isn’t telling him ‘don’t follow Me’ He’s just encouraging the man to understand what he’s getting into. Jesus is saying, “I don’t have a benefits package to offer you. There’s no guaranteed salary with this.”

The warning here for all of us is: to consider the cost of following Christ and not be swept away with emotion or impulsive desires.

21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

22 But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

To understand this, you need to know: the man’s father was still alive. If he had died, the man would be at the funeral right now. Instead, he’s expressing a need to fulfill his family obligations, to be there for mom and dad until the day they pass on and then he will have the freedom to travel around with Jesus – but that could be years from now.

In other words, the scribe wants to move too quickly, but this disciple won’t move fast enough.

So Jesus tells him, it’s better to invest your time trying to spread spiritual life than waiting for your father to die. And that’s a great message for all of us – it’s easy to put off getting involved in ministry for some other time later in life – maybe when you’re married, or maybe you’ll serve in children’s ministry when you have kids of your own, or maybe when the kids are out of the house, or maybe when you’re done helping with the grand kids, or maybe when you’re done taking care of your parents...

There are some things that just never seem to fit into our schedule, and ministry or Bible study can be one of them.

But that shouldn’t be a big surprise. We tend to avoid things that are hard even though we would say they’re good things for us to do. We put off saving money until a more convenient time. We put off exercise. Some of us even put off taking vacation until a more convenient time. And in the same way - we can experience a desire in our heart for more spiritual things and still put them off while rationalizing it because “I’ve got these other important things to do to.” Yes, you do. But Jesus is telling us to make a greater priority of knowing, following and serving Him.

And I have to point out a little nerd note here for those of you who understand grammar – when Jesus says “Follow Me” it’s a command in the present active imperative – in other words, He’s calling the disciple to “follow” Him as a continual process, as a habit of life. “Be following Me” is what He’s saying.

Having seen these two disciples, which one is more like you? Are you more prone to rush in without counting the cost and then later wash out, or are you more prone to hold back until

certain conditions are met? What gets in the way of you being available to God? What is holding you back from serving Jesus fully? It's something to chew on.

Matthew 8:23 Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. 24 And suddenly a great tempest [Grk *seismos* – lit. shaking, also used for an earthquake] arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves [a statement of how tall they were]. But He was asleep.

Let me just point out here that Jesus became tired in the ministry.

If you read the gospels you find it's a common theme. Jesus worked hard. As a result, there were times when He was exhausted. It's OK to be tired in ministry, just so long as you're not tired *of* the ministry. If you're tired *of* the ministry, chances are, you're doing things the wrong way. So, I want to make the offer once again – if you're tired *of* the ministry you're involved in – if it doesn't bring you joy, if it's a burden, a hassle, something you don't look forward to anymore: you have permission to stop.

We don't want anything happening around this church that is artificially propped up by your willpower and endurance. We don't want to see people burned out. Tired? OK. Exhausted even? OK. But unhappy? Miserable? Going through the motions? Stop. It's OK. If God wants it to keep going, He'll bring someone else along with the vision and the burden.

That's a bit of side note, but I needed to fit it in because we all need to be aware of the truth – it's OK to be tired *in* ministry, but if you're tired *of* it, it's probably time to step back.

25 Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!”

Now, it's important to remember, some of these guys are fishermen, and this is their lake – they've grown up on it, sailed it, fished it for years and *they're* freaking out? You know it's a pretty severe storm.

26 But He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. **27** So the men marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

If you know your Bible well, you know that there are echoes here of another prophet – another man of God who was on a boat in the middle of a storm. His name was Jonah. God told him to go tell the Ninevites about God, but Jonah didn't like the Ninevites so he got on a boat headed in the opposite direction.

Then God sent a storm so strong that it frightened the ship's sailors. They determined God must be punishing them for something but they couldn't figure out what it was until Jonah confessed. That's when they threw him overboard. The storms calmed and they went on their way, and a large fish, as you know, swallowed Jonah.

Now, as an aside – some people have a problem with this miracle – they say there’s no way a man could survive in the belly of a large fish underwater. But did you know human beings have been building submarines for over a hundred years? We send men down into the depths of the sea, to the deepest places on earth, for months at a time and no one thinks twice about it. It’s interesting to me that people have no problem believing men could make something like that happen every day but they reject the idea that God could keep a man alive under similar conditions *once* in human history.

Anyway, back above the surface of the water we have Jesus, also sent by God to tell people of His love and to call them to change their lives. Only, unlike Jonah, Jesus is going willingly. So He gets up, commands the storm to be calm, and continues on His mission to share His message with new people. The ability to perform the miracle underscores, highlights, His mission and message. The point is: if He can do that, then maybe we should listen to what He has to say.

And that point is about to be amplified – Jesus just proved His power and authority over the natural world, now He’s going to prove He has power and authority over the supernatural as we meet some men who are as wild and stormy on the inside as the storm was outside.

Matthew 8:28 When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed *men*, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.

29 And suddenly they cried out, saying, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”

Back in the boat the disciples were just wondering, “who can this be?” Well, the demons know. They recognize Him as “the Son of God.” They also know a time is coming – a time of final judgment and they’re not too excited about that.

30 Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. 31 So the demons begged Him, saying, “If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.”

32 And He said to them, “Go.” So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

33 Then those who kept *them* fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what *had happened* to the demon-possessed *men*. 34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged *Him* to depart from their region.

Now think about this – Jesus drives demons out of two men who were “*so fierce that no one could pass that way.*” It’s the only thing He’s done since He arrived and people are begging Him to leave.

You need to see that – you need to see that people don't always react well to the good things you do in Jesus's name. Sometimes you reach out and try to help, sometimes you try to do or say something kind, sometimes you try to be genuinely helpful, and you don't get the reaction you might expect. That's OK – it happened to Jesus too.

But the main point here is the power Jesus demonstrated over the demons.

He has power over the natural world, power to calm the storms, and He has power over the supernatural, power to cast out legions of demons. All of this is building up to what we'll see next:

Matthew 9:1 So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. **2** Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

Jesus is staring at a man who is paralyzed and He forgives the man's sins. What good does that do? And, can He even do that?

Well, we'll get to that in just a minute, but first you have to notice something really odd here. Jesus took action "when He saw THEIR faith." Last week we saw Jesus heal a servant because the centurion asked. Now we see Jesus take action because He saw "their faith."

Christian, you need to take notice of this – your prayers, your faith, can have an impact on others. God wants to reach and impact others through you. So keep praying, keep believing, keep reaching out in His name, for their sake! But now we turn our attention back to what's going on in the room:

Matthew 9:3 And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!"
4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?
5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?
6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"— then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." **7** And he arose and departed to his house.
8 Now when the multitudes saw *it*, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

Jesus makes it very clear why He is doing all these miracles – "that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."

The miracles Matthew records here in chapters 8 and 9 show the power of Jesus – power to heal people right in front of Him, and power to heal those far away – power to heal a major disease like leprosy, and power to heal a temporary illness like the flu. And now we see He has power over the natural world and the supernatural as well, but all of this is secondary to His power to forgive sin.

The miracles Jesus performed were never meant to be sensational or draw a crowd. They were always intended to make people think about the source of His power, and the source of His power was His identity – He was the son of God – the promised Messiah who came to earth to save us from sin. Along the way, yes, He healed some people, calmed a storm, cast out demons, and worked other miracles, but they were never really the point. All those things were just temporary fixes. Everyone who was healed eventually died. Storms happened again on that lake. The demons went into the pigs and then later, no doubt, possessed other people.

The real reason Jesus came was to deal with the root of all these problems – sin. The Bible tells us that sickness and death are in the world, cataclysmic storms and natural disasters are in the world, and Satan and demons are in the world, *because* the world has turned it's back on God. This is not how things were supposed to be, but when we turn away from Him, these are the consequences that come.

Sometimes there is a big, bold, direct line between the wrong we have done and the problem we experience, and other times – like with a birth defect or natural disaster - we feel the effects of being in a broken system with no specific connection to our own actions. You can be diagnosed with cancer while living a very good life, because sin has an effect on us all.

But Jesus came to save us from sin – to forgive us for the wrongs we have done, and to comfort us from the wrongs we have endured from others. And He is preparing a home for us with God where there will be no more sin. No more need for healing. No more fear of what might happen. No more demons to battle.

We don't see as many miracles happen today – though they certainly do occur – but we regularly see the greatest miracle of all: when God forgives us of our sins.

It's the miracle we all need – whether we're paralyzed or not. It's the miracle we can all receive, if we will come to Jesus, in faith.

Maybe you need to do that this morning. Maybe you're ready to surrender your life to the power of Jesus. If so, all you have to do is ask.

There are no special words or phrases, you don't have to worry about getting it right, and you don't have to walk down front. Just tell God, right where you're seated, you want to be forgiven for the wrongs you have done and you want to receive the new life that He promises in Christ. Tell Him that by His grace and with His help, you want to begin to live your life for Him. You do that, and He will hear. He promises He will hear. And He will give you what you're asking because all the spectacular miracles we read about in Scripture, were done [“that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.”](#)

Let's pray.