

JESUS CONTINUES TO DISPLAY HIS AUTHORITY

Yeshua §§44-46

I love hearing people's stories. Especially their testimonies if they are Christians. I like to ask, "What finally "clicked" when you trusted in Christ? Was it a question that was answered or an objection resolved? What puzzle piece fell into place that helped you trust in Jesus?"

For some, it was resolving the issue of dinosaurs! For others, it was simply having the gospel explained clearly. They had heard about Jesus, but never understood the significance of His crucifixion.

For all of us, trusting in Christ is a process of hearing and being persuaded by the evidence. Jesus' earthly ministry was one of preaching and calling upon people to trust His claim to be the Messiah. He did many, many signs and wonders such as healings and casting out of demons, to back up His claim. These signs and wonders were plenty of evidence in and of themselves to prove Jesus' claim to be Messiah. But when He did the miracle about which we read today, it put Him over the top.

As we pick up the story, Jesus is now operating out of Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. He has finished His first preaching tour and is now beginning His second as we read in Matthew 4:23-25.

MESSIAH'S AUTHORITY TO PREACH

(Matthew 4:23-25; see also Mark 1:35-39, Luke 4:42-44)

MATTHEW 4:23-25 (ESV)

23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

According to Dr. Fruchtenbaum, this is Jesus' second major preaching tour. His message is the Messianic Kingdom: He will establish the Kingdom if they will believe He is the Messiah.

And they had truckloads of evidence proving Jesus' claim: healings of every kind of disease, demons cast out, paralytics restored. But the healing we will study today far exceeded all these other healings as proof positive Jesus is the Messiah.

At this point, Jesus' following is huge. Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) came from Syria in the north and Judea in the south. How big were the crowds? At times they numbered

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between fifteen to twenty thousand (ex. feeding of the five thousand). Eventually, this got the attention of the Great Sanhedrin.

Capernaum was Jesus' base of operations during these preaching tours. At this time, Jesus had five disciples: Peter, Andrew, John, Philip and Nathanael. All five men lived in Capernaum or nearby. Peter, Andrew and John were fishermen by trade and since they were home, they went back to fishing while still being Jesus' disciples.

But through an awesome display of His authority over nature, Jesus challenged these men to a deeper level of commitment.

MESSIAH'S AUTHORITY OVER NATURE

(Luke 5:1-11; see also Mark 1:16-20, Matthew 4:18-22)

LUKE 5:1-11 (ESV)

1 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

The Lake of Gennesaret¹ is another name for the Sea of Galilee. After a night of fishing, Peter, his brother Andrew and their business partners, James and John, docked their boats and proceeded to clean their *empty* fishing nets.

It is likely family members came down to the shore with food and drink for the men who had been out all night. In addition, they probably helped process the catch. This would have added to the already large crowd following Jesus and present in Capernaum on this particular day.

Because of the crowd's size, Jesus used Peter's boat as a preaching platform. When He finished, He directed Peter to head back out. Tired and frustrated Peter initially balked, but changed his mind. What happened next literally changed Peter's life.

No one had ever caught two boats worth of fish; these experienced fishermen were astonished. This display of Jesus' authority over nature deeply impacted Peter in a way

¹ Gennesaret is the coastal plain that lies to the northwest of the Sea of Galilee between the cities of Magadan and Capernaum.

His other signs and wonders had not. This was Peter's world. He knew the lake. He knew fishing. This miracle touched the deepest part of Peter's soul.

It filled Him with a deep sense of unworthiness to be Jesus' disciple. Peter was overwhelmed not only by Jesus' power and authority, but His *goodness*. He could never measure up.

Instead of rejection, Jesus allayed Peter's fear and called him to a deeper level of commitment. *Don't be afraid of me Peter. In fact, Peter, I'm calling you to make a deeper commitment to me and follow me full time. I'm calling you to trust me and leave your livelihood of catching fish. I'm calling you to join me full time in the work of catching men for God.*

Any doubts Jesus could physically provide for His men and their families were dramatically answered by their miraculous haul of fish.

From this time forward, Peter, Andrew, John and James joined Philip and Nathanael in following Jesus full time as His disciples.

Their mission was to join Jesus in calling Jews and Gentiles to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah. In these days, Jesus performed a miracle that, from a Jewish perspective, was in a different category than His other miracles. This category of miracles were those that, according to the rabbis, could only be accomplished by the Messiah.

MESSIAH'S AUTHORITY OVER DEFILEMENT

(Luke 5:12-16; see also Mark 1:40-45, Matthew 8:2-4)

LUKE 5:12-16 (ESV)

12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." 13 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. 14 And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them." 15 But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. 16 But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

This is the very first instance of a Jew being healed of leprosy under the Law of Moses. Leprosy included a variety of incurable, contagious skin diseases. Leviticus 13-14 contains over 100 verses dealing with leprosy. Only a priest had authority to declare a person a leper. To be declared a leper was worse than death.

Lepers essentially became the walking dead. They had to move out of their communities to quarantined areas. They were reviled and excluded from Jewish society. They were required to cover their faces from their eyes down. They were excluded from the Temple. If they encountered someone on the road, they had to warn them by yelling, "unclean, unclean". Human touch ceased. Many considered leprosy punishment from God.

Leviticus 14 addressed healing from leprosy. The first step for a person believing they were healed was to offer a blood sacrifice at the Temple. Next, he was to shave off all the hair on his body including eyebrows and then be examined by a priest. At the time of examination two birds were sacrificed. For seven days the man would be examined. If after seven days there was no sign of leprosy, he was declared healed. After being declared healed by the priest, the person would offer four different types of offerings on the eighth day: a trespass offering, a sin offering, a burnt offering and a meal offering. The priest would anoint the healed person with blood from the sacrifices as well as oil. At that point he was restored.

All this is laid out in Leviticus 14.

But it never happened.

No Jew had ever been healed since the inauguration of the Mosaic Law.

There is no case recorded in all the rabbinic writings.

The rabbis concluded healing leprosy was a miracle only the Messiah could perform.

Luke tells us in verse 12 that this man was *full of leprosy* meaning he was approaching the end of his life from this disease. The man believed Jesus could heal, he was not sure if Jesus wanted to. Jesus responded lovingly by touching the man; probably the first touch by a clean person he had felt in years. Jesus instructed him to tell no one and go immediately to the priests; this would force the priests to take Jesus' messianic claims seriously. The priests knew that healing a leper meant Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah.

The man disobeyed and told others (Mark 1:45). Jesus had a harder time preaching in the cities. The general public knew the significance of a leper's healing. Thus, Luke 5:15 tells us, *But now even more the report about him went abroad.*

CONCLUSION

Jesus is giving overwhelming evidence backing His claim to be the Messiah. In the eyes of the Jews, healing the leper puts Jesus in a new category; the category of potential Messiah.

If they don't believe, it's not because of a lack of evidence. If they don't believe it's because they don't want to believe; they don't want Jesus to be the Messiah.

These things are written in Bible so that we might believe Jesus is the Messiah and by believing be *born again* to a living relationship with God. Each of us is accountable for our response to Jesus' story. He claimed to be the Messiah and He backed it up. It doesn't matter if it happened two thousand years ago or two minutes ago. He loves you. He wants to make you right with God. He wants to give you life.

Will you trust Him?

For those of us who have trusted Jesus, is He calling you to greater commitment, to greater service? You've trusted in Him, His blood sacrifice, His resurrection. You're born again. You've tasted the new life.

But have you gone back to the fish?

Where are you consciously, intentionally serving Jesus? In what concrete way are you using your spiritual gift(s) to build up this church family and reach our community for Jesus?

Are you living for the fish?

Is it time to leave your nets and serve Jesus?

Our ministry fair next Sunday will give you numerous ways to serve Jesus here, in our community and in the world.