

Jesus' Power over Disease, Part 1

Matthew 8:1-4

2257

INTRODUCTION

A. The Setting of Christ's Miracles in Matthew

1. An Affirmation of Christ's Deity

Chapters eight through twelve of Matthew are critical to the understanding of the life of Christ and the message of Matthew. In that section, Matthew records nine of the countless miracles performed by Jesus Christ as examples of His power. Those miracles are His credentials as the Messiah--signs that point convincingly to His deity, for only God can do the things that He did. The sad part is that after the miracles in chapters 8 and 9 and the preaching that follows them, the Jewish leaders concluded that Jesus was of the devil in chapter 12. Matthew shows that Christ had done everything possible to manifest His deity, but the leaders concluded exactly the opposite. As a result, He turned from the Jewish religious structure toward the establishment of a Gentile Church in chapter 13.

Notice that chapter 8 begins with three miracles of healing that involve a leper in verses 2-4, a man with paralysis in verses 5-13, and a woman with a fever in verses 14-15. Those form the opening triad of miracles among the nine miracles in chapters 8 and 9. There are three sections of miracles, each section containing three miracles followed by a response. Those miracles manifest the deity of Jesus Christ by demonstrating creative power that can only be attributed to God. They are the credentials of the King--proof that He is divine.

Those miracles also serve as...

2. An Answer to the Debate

The first section of miracles comes at a very strategic point in the Gospel of Matthew, because Jesus had just delivered a blistering sermon in chapters 5 through 7. He had turned the Jewish religious world topsy-turvy by saying that its teachings, attitudes, and actions were wrong. Much of what they believed in and hoped for was wrong. Unlike other teachers, Jesus never bothered to quote any rabbis or any of their well-known sources of authority. He affirmed the truth by repeatedly saying, "Ye have heard that it was said...but I say..." (Mt. 5:21-22). Matthew records the peoples' reaction to Jesus' sermon in 7:28-29: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The rabbis quoted other fallible rabbis to support their material, but Jesus merely spoke without quoting any source. In so doing, He unmasked them as spiritual phonies.

This brings up some very pointed questions: A Jewish person in the first century probably would

have wondered, "Who is saying these things? By what authority does He speak? Why should we believe what He's saying?" Chapters 8 and 9 provide the answers to those questions. The fact that Christ is God and can perform miracles is proof that He had the right to speak as He did. In the person of Jesus we see God at work.

B. The Significance of Christ's First Miracles in Matthew

Matthew records four key things about the first three miracles that Jesus performed:

1. He Begins at the Lowest Level of Human Need

Jesus treated the physical problems of people. Although life consists of more than just the physical, Jesus is sympathetic about that realm. It's wonderful that the miracles of Jesus not only dealt with spiritual things, but with physical things as well, as they touch man at his most immediate level of recognized need. In the first set of miracles, Jesus confronted human disease, as compared to the second set where He dealt more with spiritual problems. By recording Christ's meeting the lowest level of human needs, Matthew shows the sympathy of Christ in addition to His power.

2. He Compassionately Responds to Appeals

In the first miracle of healing, the leper said, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean" (Mt. 8:2b). In the second miracle, Jesus agreed to heal the centurion's servant, saying, "I will come and heal him" (8:7). In the third miracle, according to what Luke adds in the parallel passage, friends of Peter's family requested Jesus to come and heal Peter's mother-in-law, and He did. In all three cases He responded to the appeals from the hearts of people.

3. He Acts on His Own Will

Although Jesus is sympathetic and deeply compassionate, He is also sovereign. In each case, He acted on His own volition, saying, "I will, be thou clean" (v. 3); "I will come and heal him" (v. 7); "And He touched her hand, and the fever left her..." (v. 15).

4. He Graciously Approaches the Lowly in Society

In each of those miracles, Jesus touched someone who was considered to be at the lowest level of human existence. First, a leper; second, a Gentile; and third, a woman. The subtlety of His interaction with such individuals devastated the pride of the Pharisees. Jesus put His emphasis on the humble and the outcast. In fact, the first person He ever revealed His messiahship to was a harlot in Samaria who wasn't even Jewish! That was a shock to the Jewish society of His day.

From the very start, Jesus made it clear that He was going to establish His authority by miraculous power. Yet, the sad thing is that with all His willingness to compassionately heal the helpless of society, the Jewish leaders turned their backs on Him, concluding in chapter 12 that the miracles He accomplished were done by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. In fact, they hated Him so much, they sought to kill Him because He upset their religious security. They refused to accept the abundant evidence of His divine power: He cleansed a leper, healed a servant, raised up a woman, controlled the sea, cast out demons, made the blind see, the crippled walk, the dumb speak, and healed every single sickness that was brought to Him.

In the flow of Matthew's narrative, chapter 8 begins where chapter 4 left off: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto Him all the sick people that were taken with diverse diseases and torments, and those who were possessed with demons, and those who were epileptics, and those who had palsy [paralysis]; and He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond the Jordan" (4:23-25). Then, in the midst of His healing ministry, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, came down and again started healing uncounted numbers of people who came to Him.

I. THE WRETCHED MAN (vv. 1-4)

"When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshiped him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."

A. The Attraction to the Lord (v. 1)

"When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him."

Jesus came down from a mountain near the village of Capernaum after He had finished preaching His sermon. Many people continued to follow Him, but not because they loved Him or believed in Him; they were curious about His unique authority. They had never heard anybody speak in such a manner or heal people so miraculously. As a result, a huge crowd was attracted to Jesus and followed Him to see what other things He would do.

B. The Analysis of the Leprosy (v. 2a)

"And, behold, there came [lit. `approached'] a leper..."

What is unusual about this scene is that a leper wouldn't normally dare to approach someone; but this one did. To better understand why, let us examine...

1. The Nature of Leprosy

The word "leper" is from the Greek word *lepros*, which comes from the root word *lepis*, which means "scale." In the Old Testament, there is a Hebrew word that is also translated leprosy that also means "scale." In both cases, leprosy referred to some kind of scaly skin manifestation as one symptom of the disease, though it could go much deeper than that. There is a lot of debate about whether the leprosy of the Bible was the same as what we know today as Hansen's Disease. We can't be sure because diseases can take on new forms over the centuries as people build up immunities for them. It seems best to assume from the description of Leviticus 13 that it was very similar. The only real comparison that we can draw to the biblical disease will come from our understanding of modern leprosy. That has been the conclusion of most people who have studied the disease.

Leprosy found its way into the lives of the children of Israel. That horrible disease was evidently picked up in Egypt. Some classical sources mention that leprosy originated in Egypt, and the disease has been found in at least one mummified body that has been discovered in Egypt. Leprosy might have been transmitted to the children of Israel when they were in the land of Egypt and carried with them into the Promised Land. God designed many laws for Israel to protect them from contracting and spreading such diseases as leprosy. Modern day leprosy, now known to be caused by bacteria called *mycobacterium leprae*, is only communicable to less than 10% of the world's population. In other words, at least 90% of people in our day cannot contract leprosy. However, it appears that in ancient times the disease was more communicable. For example, Jesus said in Luke 4:27 that "many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha, the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman, the Syrian." But today, even though leprosy is on the rise in the United States and apparently can't be eliminated, it can be controlled by a drug called Dapsone.

2. The Instructions About Leprosy

In Leviticus 13, God gave Israel very clear directions regarding...

a. The Process of Identifying Leprosy

1) The Scripture About the Disease

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab [rash] or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or one of his sons the priests. And the priest shall look at the mark on the skin of the body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of leprosy; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him unclean. But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and it does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair on it has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate him who has the infection for seven days. And the priest shall look at him on the seventh day, and if in his eyes the infection has not changed, and the infection has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days. And the priest shall look at him again on the seventh day; and if the infection has faded, and the mark has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a [rash (possibly psoriasis or eczema)]. And he shall wash his clothes and be clean. But if the [rash] spreads farther on the skin, after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again to the priest. And the priest shall look, and if the [rash] has spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy. When the infection of leprosy is on a man, then he shall be brought to the priest. The priest shall then look, and if there is a white swelling in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling, it is a chronic leprosy on the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not isolate him, for he is unclean. And if the leprosy breaks out farther on the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of him who has the infection from his head even to his feet, as far as the priest can see, then the priest shall look, and behold, if the leprosy has covered all his body, he shall pronounce clean him who has the infection; it has all turned white and he is clean" (vv. 1-13; NASB)

In other words, if his skin just turns white, but doesn't break out in open, raw sores, then it isn't a serious form of leprosy. Herodotus and Hippocrates in their ancient writings wrote about a disease known as leukoderma, which was an infection that attacked the pigmentation of the skin and turned it a patchy white color. Such symptoms could have been evidence of eczema, psoriasis, or any relatively harmless skin disorder, including the mild form of leprosy known as "tuberculoid," which may last for one to three years.

2) The Seriousness of the Disease

A person who had the severe kind of leprosy, which we identify as lepromatous, had to follow the instructions at the end of Leviticus 13: "As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered, and he shall cover his mustache and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" (v. 45; NASB).

A Los Angeles Times article on the medical analysis of Hansen's disease stated that leprosy can be passed on to others when it is inhaled through the air. That is a good reason for a leper to cover his mouth. People have also contracted leprosy when they have both touched the same object. For example, there are cases where people who have been tattooed with the same needle, become infected with the same kind of leprosy. That is why Leviticus 13 instructed a person who had the severe kind of leprosy to do away with his garments. As long as he had that infection, he had to cover his face and make an announcement of his presence so that no one would get near him. In fact, the Talmud forbade a Jew from getting any closer than six feet to a leper, and if there was a wind blowing, one hundred fifty feet was the limit. Of the sixty-one defilements in Judaism, the most serious was contacting a dead body and next to that was being infected with leprosy. Consequently, people didn't go near lepers, let alone touch them. In a very important article on the Old Testament word for leprosy, R.K. Harrison points out that all of the symptoms of Leviticus 13 "could presage clinical leprosy" (Colin Brown, ed. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967], p. 465). Therefore, the tests of Leviticus were needed to distinguish between different skin infections so that in obvious cases of leprosy, the person could be put out.

3) The Symptoms of the Disease

Serious leprosy is a terrible disease as indicated:

The disease which we today call leprosy generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in such spots loses its original color. It gets to be thick, glossy, and scaly.... As the sickness progresses, the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch, with deep furrows between the swellings, so that the face of the afflicted individual begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off or are absorbed; toes are affected similarly. Eyebrows and eyelashes drop out. By this time one can see the person in this pitiable condition is a leper. By a touch of the finger one can also feel it. One can even smell it, for the leper emits a very unpleasant odor. Moreover, in view of the fact that the disease-producing agent frequently also attacks the larynx, the leper's voice acquires a grating quality. "His throat becomes hoarse, and you can now not only see, feel, and smell the leper, but you can hear his rasping voice. And if you stay with him for some time, you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your mouth, probably due to the odor." (L.S. Huizenga, Unclean! Unclean!, [Grand Rapids: 1927], p. 149; as cited by W. Hendriksen in The Gospel of Matthew [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973], p. 388)

b. The Purposes for Isolating Leprosy

All the human senses naturally would be repulsed at a leper who suffered from this horrifying disease. Whether or not it could attack the total population or only a few people, a leper had to be sent out of the camp to protect the health of others. In 2 Samuel 3:29, David cursed the house of Joab that it might never be without a leper. That was evidently one of the worst things that could be said about someone, especially since the disease had no cure.

Because of the physical ugliness of the disease, God had a spiritual purpose in marking out lepers as ceremonially unclean: leprosy was a most graphic illustration of the sin that defiles the whole body. Sin is ugly, loathsome, incurable, and contaminating; it separates men from God and makes them outcasts. Every leper not only lived with the stigma of his own disease, but also with the stigma of being a walking illustration of sin. In fact, one rabbi in the Talmud said that when he saw lepers, he flung stones at them to keep them away. Another rabbi said that he would not even eat an egg bought in a street where a leper had passed by. In this light, isn't it shocking that Jesus began

presenting the credentials of His Messiahship by healing a leper--not some sick Pharisee in town? Let's look at Jesus' first specific healing recorded in Matthew:

C. The Approach of the Leper (v. 2)

1. His Confidence

"And, behold, there came [approached] a leper..."

After all that we have seen regarding leprosy, it is clear that lepers wouldn't dare approach another person to communicate with him. Such an act was unthinkable, shameful, and contrary to Old Testament law. You will remember that a leper was required to announce his presence by covering his mouth and saying, "Unclean, unclean," so that no one would come near. But the very fact that this leper approached Jesus shows us that he came with confidence. He didn't crawl or sneak around and try to whisper from behind a bush to get Jesus' attention; he came right up to Him. I can imagine that much of that crowd left in a hurry. I see here a man who so desperately sensed his need, he didn't care what others thought. Normally, people in his condition would be so socially devastated that they wouldn't show up in a crowd, but this leper lost all sense of shame and social stigma. That's how deep his need was. Josephus, the ancient historian, tells us that lepers were treated like dead men. But that wasn't going to stop him; he may have been dead in everybody's eyes, but he still came, because he recognized that his need was beyond his power to remedy and he wanted help more than he wanted to save his reputation.

2. His Reverence

"...and worshiped him, saying, Lord..."

We may not be able to say much about his appearance, but we can say a lot about his soul. In stark contrast to the Pharisees, who were arrayed in their fancy garb and had their beards perfectly trimmed--but were spiritually wretched on the inside (Mt. 23:27-28)--stood the leper. He was wretched and filthy on the outside, yet beautifully reverent on the inside. I believe when he said "Lord", he wasn't using it in the sense of "Sir"; rather, he acknowledged that he was in the presence of God, because he fell prostrate before Jesus to worship Him (Gk. proskuein). I don't know where that leper got his information about Christ, but there had been enough healings going on in his area for him to know that Jesus was not just a man. He came and worshiped in a way men come before kings and God. I believe he came because he had a worshiping heart. He was in the presence of God and he knew it. It is wonderful to see that his soul was turned toward God first in worship because he understood that the soul was more important than the body. Before he sought anything for himself, he exalted God.

Third, in this leper's approach I see...

3. His Humility

"...if thou wilt..."

The leper didn't demand anything--he didn't speak his will as if Christ had to comply, listing the reasons why he had to be healed. He didn't try to affirm his own worthiness or bellyache because he had a disease that other folks didn't. He didn't talk about his rights or even about his desires, saying, "I'd like to be healed." He only said, "If You wanted to heal me, You could. I'm not saying what You

ought to do, because You're the Lord." That's a far cry from what you hear today when people are told to demand healing from God by "claiming" it. healing. This man, however, made no such claim-- he worshiped first, never asking for anything. I agree with the commentator Lenski, that the leper was willing to accept Jesus' choice for him to remain in his "living death" if He had so willed (The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964], p. 319). In that event, I believe that he would have gone away still believing in Jesus, or he wouldn't have worshiped first and left out any request on his own behalf. That man manifested a pure heart.

4. His Faith

"...Thou canst make me clean."

The word for "canst" in the Greek is *dunamai*. It is the term that the word dynamite is derived from. Appropriately, it means "to have power." The leper, who was "full of leprosy" according to Luke, the doctor (5:12), was convinced that Jesus had the power to heal him. Maybe he knew that because he had been around when Jesus was healing in Matthew 4. When a man says, "If You will, You can do it," he illustrates faith at its highest point, because he knows that God is able, and submits to His sovereignty. There are lots of people who say they believe He is able, but they want to corner Him to accomplish their desires. There are other people who question whether He can. But a true man of faith says, "I know You can, I just don't know if You will." That's the highest level of faith.

So, the leper came with confidence because he had a deep need; he came with reverence because he saw God; he came with humility because he realized that God was sovereign; and he came with faith, because he knew that Jesus could heal him.

D. The Acting of the Lord (vv. 3-4)

1. The Hand of Healing (v. 3)

a. Its Simplicity (v. 3a)

"And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him..."

That is about all it says in the text, but it could be added that the whole crowd gasped--Jesus had touched a leper! That was seemingly contrary to Leviticus 5:3, which prohibited anyone from touching "the uncleanness of a man." But a touch from someone clean was probably what that leper needed more than anything else. Jesus touched him, though He didn't have to. He could have stood on a roof and said, "Be clean!" as angels sang, the earth shook, and thunder sounded. However, there were no spectacular dramatics.

b. Its Suddenness (v. 3b)

"...[Jesus said] I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy was cleansed."

Essentially all of Jesus' miracles were immediate. It bothers me when people say, "I went to the healer and was healed, and have been getting better ever since." That's not healing. Jesus put forth His hand and touched him and true healing occurred. When we touch a disease, we get contaminated; when He touched a disease, it was cleansed with His power. I can imagine those shriveled up claws instantly becoming beautiful hands along with the restoration of his face, and the rest of his body. Even though leprosy had eaten away the leper's eyebrows and eyelashes, left his skin scaly and bloody, destroyed his nose and throat, and caused his fingers and toes to be worn off, Jesus was able to restore him instantly to his former health. In comparison to that omnipotent display, all the modern "healing" fades into absolute nothingness. You can line up all the so-called healers in the world and they can pick out any leper they want, but none of them will be able to do

what Jesus did. Let those healers be silent, for their claims are folly in comparison to the power of Christ, who alone is able to recreate parts of the body that have been destroyed.

2. The Command for Cleansing (v. 4)

"And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."

a. Its Procedure

What is the first evidence that Christ has entered your life? Obedience. That is why He says, "Now that you've been healed, do what Moses commanded in the law of God." In the unlikely event that a leper was healed, Leviticus 14 gave instructions about the ceremony for his cleansing at the Temple: First of all, he had to take two birds and kill one of them over running water. The other was dipped in the blood of the first bird along with cedar wood, a scarlet cord, and hyssop (a plant) and then allowed to fly away. That pictured resurrection. Then the former leper washed himself and his clothes, shaved, and waited seven days to be re-examined. Afterwards, he shaved his hair, head, and eyebrows, and sacrificed two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb, three tenths of a measure of fine flour mingled with oil, and about a pint of oil. Then the leper was touched on the tip of his right ear, thumb, and big toe with blood and oil. Upon final examination, if the cure was real, the man was given a certificate stating that he had been cleansed.

b. Its Purpose

You say, "I can understand that Jesus wanted the leper to obey because He didn't come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. But why did He instruct him not to tell anybody else?" Some people believe that Jesus didn't want to stir up a crowd that only followed Him because he was a miracle worker. That is very possible because large crowds made it difficult for Him to function. Others say Jesus said that because He didn't want the people to see Him as someone who could throw off the yoke of Rome as a political leader. You may remember in John 6:15 that the people tried to do that very thing. And still others say that Jesus didn't want to seek any exaltation during the time of His humiliation.

There may be truth in all of those suggestions, but let me give you what I think is the best reason: If you read the rest of the verse, you find that he was instructed to appear before the priests "for a testimony unto them." If the leper had gone down to the Temple to participate in the cleansing and eight-day examination required in the Mosaic law, the priests would have had to conclude he was cleansed. Then, when they discovered that Jesus of Nazareth was responsible for the leper's healing, they would be trapped in their own conclusions. Their own examination would confirm the power of Christ. But that all hinged on the leper's hurrying to Jerusalem without spreading the news, or word would get around that Jesus healed him, and the priests wouldn't be interested in examining him. Unfortunately, the man didn't follow Jesus' instruction, as Mark 1:45 tells us. He became so excited that he failed to obey.

CONCLUSION

A. The Characteristics of Conversion

Jesus said, "Which is more difficult, to heal disease or forgive sin?" (Mk. 2:9). Do you know why He said that? In doing those kinds of miracles, He was not only revealing His power over disease, but also using them as illustrations of His power over sin. I think our text is analogous to a conversion. Leprosy, a ceremonially unclean illness, is a demonstration of sin. Like leprosy, sin is pervasive, ugly, loathsome, communicable, incurable, and makes you an outcast. In spite of that however, the leper came with confidence, because he was desperate over his leprosy. That's the first step of how conversion happens: people don't get saved unless they are desperate over the loathsomeness of

the disease of sin. That element is often missing in the evangelism of our time. The man came, having lost all fear of being ostracized. He was overwhelmed with the loathsomeness of his disease. Coming to Christ is not getting on the bandwagon--it's being wretched and knowing it.

Second, the leper came worshiping. I believe that true conversion occurs when desperate people come worshiping God--not seeking things for themselves, but seeking God's glory. There needs to be a recognition of His majesty, a sense of awe regarding His lordship.

Third, he came humbly. I think true salvation doesn't take the perspective of you doing God a favor. There's no self-will or self-centeredness, no sense of worthiness, and no acknowledgement of rights or claims involved. It's the meek who inherit the Kingdom.

Finally, the leper came with faith. He believed that Jesus could heal him. You can't be saved without faith. So, with regard to salvation, you will be touched and cleansed when you come to Christ in faith. And may I add that the disease of sin is infinitely worse than the disease of leprosy.

B. The Consequences of Conversion

Once you're saved, do you know what the Lord asks? "Will you obey the law of God, and let people discover for themselves that I have changed your life?" A living testimony can be more effective than a verbal one. It's better for you to say nothing and let the world see that Jesus changed your life by their own examination, than for you not to be able to support what you say with the way you live. Here was a man running around testifying, "Jesus changed my life! Look at me--I used to be a leper, but come and see me now!" Then somebody asks, "Why aren't you down showing yourself to the priest?" An answer like, "I'm going to get to that," could have discredited his testimony. A disobedient life in the midst of a testimony is meaningless; the testimony is rendered invalid. Be obedient, and in the midst of your obedience, God will manifest the transforming power of Christ. Your life speaks louder than words.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why does Matthew record the miracles of Jesus? What are they credentials of?
2. Sadly, after Jesus had performed many miracles, what did a number of Jewish leaders conclude in Matthew 12? As a result, what did Jesus do?
3. What type of miracles are the first three of the nine miracles that are recorded in Matthew 8-9?
4. What was unique about Jesus' teaching? What was the reaction of the people to His teaching (Mt. 7:28-29)?
5. What are some significant elements of Christ's healings in Matthew 8?
6. After Jesus had preached His Sermon on the Mount, why did many people continue to follow Him?
7. Where did leprosy apparently originate? When would it have been transmitted to the Israelites?

8. What is one reason why God designed many laws regarding leprosy?
9. What did a person who had the severe form of leprosy have to do, according to Leviticus 13:45?
10. What were considered to be the two most serious defilements in Judaism?
11. What spiritual purpose did God have in marking out leprosy as ceremonially unclean?
12. What attitude did the leper manifest in his approach to Jesus?
13. Why had the leper lost all sense of social stigma?
14. What did the leper recognize that prompted him to worship Jesus?
15. How did the leper express his humility?
16. Even though he was full of leprosy, what was the leper convinced of?
17. Describe the highest level of faith.
18. How does the healing ministry of Christ differ from the ministries of modern "healers"?
19. Why did Jesus tell the leper not to tell anyone but the priest of his healing? List a few possible reasons.
20. What is the healing of the leper analogous to? Explain.
21. How can the testimony of a changed life be discredited?

Pondering the Principles

1. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," and in Romans 8:29, he said that God desires to conform us "to the image of His Son." Knowing, then, that we are to become more like Christ within the limitations of our humanity, how can we model ourselves after Him, even though we cannot effect a miraculous cure for someone? Look through the significance of Christ's first miracles in Matthew on page 2. List some practical ways that you could minister to the physical needs of people in your sphere of influence. Have you compassionately responded to any appeals from those in need? Did you take action independently of others, or did you only respond to the pressure of what others would think if you neglected to help? Though you may not have much interaction with the lowliest in society because of where you work or live, occasionally you do meet those whom others would avoid because of their ethnic background, poverty, or appearance. Keep a lookout with an eye towards ministry for those who may be ignored by society, but are nevertheless loved by God.

2. Does the manner in which the leper worshiped Jesus exemplify your own reverence toward God? Do you approach God in prayer primarily to acknowledge His majesty and seek to know Him more, or is your prayer simply a tool for prying requests out of Him? Read through Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9 for a model of a prayer with the proper perspective.

3. Imagine a life insurance agent who wants to sell you a policy he would never buy himself, or a car salesman who is trying to sell you an American car, but drives a Japanese car. It is hard to have confidence in a person who doesn't believe in what he sells, because his words aren't clearly backed up by his actions. Evaluate your actions: what you say, where you spend your time, and how you do things. Is your testimony enhanced or hindered by any of those things?

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