

Marks of the Messiah

Matthew 8:14-17

(The following text is taken from a sermon preached by Gil Rugh.)

1. Peter's Mother-In-Law Healed
2. Three Healings Reviewed
3. Demon Possession Surveyed
4. The Miracles Fulfill Old Testament Prophecy
5. Is Healing In the Atonement?
6. The Future Aspects of Salvation
7. Future Removal of Suffering
8. Future Abolishment of Death
9. Future Resurrection
10. Future Glorification
11. Removal of Illness Is Future
12. Christ Is the Messiah

Matthew's purpose in writing his gospel is to present Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel. He will offer evidence that Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the one who would come to establish a kingdom and rule and reign as king. Israel will be the key nation in this kingdom, and the capital will be at Jerusalem. In chapters 8 and 9, Matthew is bringing together a collection of miracles, not necessarily in chronological order, but in line with his purpose to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah.

The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied in such passages as Isaiah 29 and 35 that when the Messiah came, He would not only take care of the sin of Israel, but He would also provide for physical deliverance and healing for the nation. Therefore, Matthew presents miracles such as physical healing, casting out of demons and calming the storm to show that Christ indeed has power over everything on this earth. In that way, Matthew shows Him as none other than the Messiah who was prophesied in the Old Testament.

1. Peter's Mother-In-Law Healed

In Matthew 8:1-13, Matthew recorded two miracles that Christ performed to demonstrate His power. In Matthew 8:14, Matthew records another miracle, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. The accounts of this event given in the other gospels record that Peter's mother-in-law was healed after Christ had attended the synagogue on the Sabbath Day.

Matthew writes in verse 14, **"And when Jesus had come to Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever."** She was ill, perhaps with malaria, although Matthew does not tell the nature of her illness. But she had a fever which had caused her to be bedridden. It may come as a surprise that Peter would have a mother-in-law, because from the perspective of some, Peter was the first pope. However, Scripture is clear that Peter was married. Only married men have mothers-in-law.

Paul confirms that Peter was married when he refers to the wives of the apostles in 1 Corinthians 9:5: **"Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?"** He makes it clear that the other apostles had wives and said that it would be alright for him to have a wife too, but for certain reasons which he specified, he did not choose to be married. However, the other apostles, including Peter, were married. It was evidently the practice, from Paul's comment here, that the other apostles' wives traveled with them as they ministered. Tradition indicates that Peter had to watch the execution of his wife just before he himself was executed. Whether this tradition is true or not, the illness of Peter's mother-in-law became the occasion for Christ to again demonstrate His power over sickness.

Matthew 8:15 describes her healing: **“And He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and waited on Him.”** This miracle is carried out in simplicity with no great fanfare. Christ does not have to work hard to accomplish this mighty work of power. He simply reaches out and touches her hand. As with the other miracles, all He has to do is speak the word, touch the person and the miracle is done. She is immediately restored to perfect health so that she is able to get out of bed and serve them.

The word which is translated “*waited*” means to serve. After her miraculous healing, this lady went about her duty of serving Christ. Much application could be drawn from this point, that the work of Christ and His power in lives is for the purpose of giving His people the ability to serve Him. But in this passage it simply means that she went about the tasks that were necessary such as preparing food, making Him more comfortable or whatever was necessary. She was immediately restored to health with no process involved, no months of waiting and no combination of good works and other things. Christ simply touched her and immediately she was healed.

2. Three Healings Reviewed

The first three people Matthew records as being healed by Christ are significant. The first was an unclean leper, an outcast from Israel. The second one to benefit from His miraculous power was a centurion, a Gentile! As far as Jews were concerned, Gentiles were dogs. The third miracle Matthew records was done on behalf of a woman. The low esteem the Jews had toward women is evidenced in their prayer, “*Lord, I thank you I was not born a woman.*”

The subjects of these miracles are significant because they demonstrate that God’s ways are not always our ways. One would think that if Christ really wants to make an impact and impress people with His campaign as the Messiah, He should perform miracles for the important people, like the ruling Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes. But later in Matthew, when Christ has the opportunity to perform a miracle in the presence of Herod, He will not even do that. Here among the lowly, the outcasts, the insignificant people, Christ provides great demonstrations of His power, which testify to the fact that He is the Messiah.

If we had planned His miracles, we would have had Christ do the miracle on Herod or a member of his family or possibly on the high priest or a member of his family. We would make sure that He performed the miracle on someone who would really make a difference. With the celebrity mentality of our day, it is famous and important people who make the difference. But that is not the way Jesus Christ ministered, and it is not the plan and purpose of God. We ought to remind ourselves of that. God does call some mighty and some noble, but for the most part, He calls common, everyday people. This should be a great encouragement to us. Christ performed His ministry of miracles and offered His credentials as Messiah among those whom the nation of Israel did not even hold in respect.

It is important to keep in mind that even though ten specific miracles are recorded in chapters 8 and 9, this is not all of the miracles that Christ did. Many more are lumped together in verse 16: **“And when evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill.”** Matthew does not tell how many people experienced the power of Christ in deliverance and healing during this time, but there were multitudes. Word of Christ’s presence had spread, and Matthew 8:1 says that a great multitude came down from the mountain where He had just delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

When evening had come, many people flocked to the house, bringing with them people who were demon-possessed and who had all kinds of physical illnesses. These events probably occurred on a Sabbath Day, because it says many people flocked to Him *in the evening*. The Jews had strict restrictions regarding activities on the Sabbath. For example, they were not allowed to carry a burden on the Sabbath. A burden was defined as anything that weighed more than two dried figs. So they could not carry the sick to Jesus until the Sabbath was over. The Jews were allowed to keep a sick person from getting worse or from dying on the Sabbath, but they were not allowed to do anything that would make him well on the Sabbath. They considered that work. So the people waited until evening according to verse 16. They did not have a watch to check the time, but when two stars appeared in the sky, the Sabbath was over and evening had arrived.

3. Demon Possession Surveyed

A brief consideration of demon possession is appropriate because it recurs throughout the Gospel of Matthew.

According to verse 16, demons are spirit beings: **“They brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word.”** Demons are personal spirit beings, angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God. As a result of that rebellion, they along with Satan lost their position in heaven as serving angels or ministering spirits of God. Now they function as emissaries of Satan helping him to carry out his program of opposition to God in the world.

Demons have the power to possess people. Demon possession involves a spirit being moving into and taking control of the body of a person. The indwelling of these spirits and their controlling the person manifests itself in a variety of ways which will be seen in the study of the Gospel of Matthew. Some of the evidences of demon possession include physical illness, insanity, supernatural physical strength, and supernatural insight into the future.

In the time of Christ, there seemed to be an outbreak of demonic activity, probably associated with the coming to earth of the Messiah, the Son of God, personally and bodily. People of that day seemed to have no problem recognizing demon possession and demonic activity. Apparently they were able to recognize who was being afflicted by demons and who was not.

My understanding of the Scriptures is that the activity of demons continues today. Ephesians 6:12 says, **“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”** This is referring to Satan and demonic activity. The Bible tells of the doctrines of demons and of the fact that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. There is no reason why some people could not experience demonic influence in their lives today or why some could not be demon-possessed. We do not seem to have the clear recognition of demons which characterized the time of Christ’s ministry on earth, but that recognition may not be necessary today. It was necessary during the time Christ was on earth because it clearly indicated that He had power not only over physical illness but over the spirit world as well. It was an opportunity for Christ’s power to be demonstrated in a special way.

In all probability we confront people today who are demon-possessed. There is a lot of voodoo going on today even among those who profess to be believers to try to get rid of the demons. The solution of Scripture is rather simple, present the gospel of Jesus Christ. Tell the person that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross to pay the penalty for his sin and that He was raised from the dead because that penalty had been paid. The moment that person believes in Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God moves into that person’s body and takes up residence there. Paul says that the bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19).

The Spirit of God indwells believers and resides in them. First John 4:4 says, **“greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”** The Spirit of God is in believers while Satan and demons are in the world. I understand the Scriptures to indicate clearly that believers cannot be demon-possessed. A demon cannot indwell the body of a believer because that body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

A believer, however, can be influenced by demons. When I submit to the flesh and its desires, I open the door for Satan and demons to influence me. But as far as the possession of a believer by demons is concerned, I believe it is a Scriptural impossibility. If the demon-possessed person will believe in Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God will move in and the demon will have to move out. I do not see any need to go through any particular incantations or contortions to rid one of a demon. We must simply present the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I believe that it is a fearful thing to be a person who is not a believer in Jesus Christ. One who is not a believer is in the realm of Satan, the god of this world. The unbeliever is one of Satan’s children, under his influence. Satan has the power to have his demons move in and take control.

4. The Miracles Fulfill Old Testament Prophecy

In Matthew 8:14-17, a confrontation is under way between Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies. Demonic beings are exercising their control over the lives and bodies of people on earth, but notice Christ’s power in Matthew 8:16: **“He cast out the spirits with a word.”** There is no great struggle going on here. Christ speaks the word, and the spirits must obey because He is the Lord. He is the ruler, so He has the power

to command them with a word. This demonstrates that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that He has authority and power over spirit beings as well as human beings.

Notice also in the last phrase of verse 16 that Christ **“healed all who were ill.”** No one who came to this healing service went away on crutches or in a wheelchair. Christ healed all the sick who came to Him. The Bible says nothing about varying degrees of faith, which is one of the excuses often heard today for failure to receive healing. Christ healed all who were ill; it was no sooner said than done.

After Matthew records the healing of the sick and the casting out of demons, he gives the reason for these miracles in verse 17: **“In order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ‘He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases.’”** If you were asked which was the greatest prophetic chapter in the entire Old Testament, you would probably say without reservation that it is Isaiah 53. This pinnacle of Old Testament prophecy lays out in detail the suffering and death of the Messiah. The verse quoted by Matthew is Isaiah 53:4.

When Jesus Christ was performing miracles of healing and casting out demons, He was showing that He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah because the prophet said that the Messiah would deal with bodily afflictions. It is important to note that the purpose of this healing ministry was to demonstrate that Christ was the Messiah. He performed these miracles to show to Israel that He was their King.

5. Is Healing In the Atonement?

These events raise a significant question: Is healing in the atonement? Stated another way, Did Jesus Christ die for our sins and our sicknesses?

If Christ died for our sins and our sicknesses, can we then say that it is never God’s will for His child who is walking in His will to suffer physical illness? Many professing believers teach that today. I would answer the question in two different ways.

Is healing in the atonement? *Yes, it is.* Does that mean that it is never God’s will for his children to be sick? *No, it does not.* Improper teaching on this subject pervades American Christianity today, broadly speaking. If you watch certain television shows, you will see preachers claiming to have healing ministries because, they claim, healing is in the atonement.

The first thing to remember is that the basic problem is sin, which is the root cause of all difficulties. There are results of sin which must be considered, such as demon possession, physical affliction and physical death. But those are the results of sin; they are not separate issues that have to be dealt with. As a result of sin, there is physical illness and physical death. All physical illness can be seen in the context of physical death because illness is a preparation for death and leads to it ultimately if not dealt with.

A couple of passages will stress the connection between sin, illness and death. In the closing section of Romans 1, Paul lays out a presentation of the disgusting impact of sin upon humanity showing the decadence and decay that sin has brought. He says in the last verse, **“Although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them”** (v. 32). The connection is clear. Those who practice sin are worthy of death. Paul also wrote in Romans 5:12, **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”** You cannot miss the connection between death and sin in these passages. Death includes physical, spiritual and eternal death. This is the result of sin. Romans 6:23 says, **“For the wages of sin is death.”** If there were no sin, there would be no death. Neither would there be sicknesses such as cancer, heart attacks or other illnesses which inevitably bring about death.

Another passage which makes a clear connection between death and sin is James 1:13-15: **“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has**

conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” All death, physical death, spiritual death and eternal death, is the result of sin.

This being the case, it is obvious that when Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin, He thereby dealt with the issues of sickness and death, because He not only dealt with the cause, He also dealt with the results. Jesus Christ dealt with the root problem, sin. **“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross”** (1 Peter 2:24). When He did that, He dealt with sickness and death, because once the issue of sin is dealt with, the issues of sickness and death are also resolved.

Scripture is clear that when a person believes that Jesus Christ died for him personally, he is immediately cleared of his sins and forgiven by God. Such a person has what is called *positional perfection* before God. That does not mean he has bodily perfection. It does not mean there is no sin in his practice or that he lives a perfect life from that point on. The maturing process is necessary to make him more like Jesus Christ.

6. The Future Aspects of Salvation

When Christ died on the cross, He dealt with the issue of sin and also with its results which are sickness and death. When you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, God promises you a future resurrection body which will be glorified, but that promise is awaiting future fulfillment.

When I believed in Christ as my Savior, I received the complete forgiveness of all my sins and the promise of deliverance from the power and effects of sin, including sickness and death. But that has not all been realized in my experience as yet. There are future aspects of the salvation I have received in Jesus Christ.

Paul also addressed this issue in Romans 8:11: **“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.”** In this verse Paul says that the Spirit of God resides in the person who is a believer. This verse also says that these mortal bodies which are, at present, subject to suffering and subsequent physical death will, at a future time, be given life by the Spirit of God who indwells them. Then that body will no longer be characterized as mortal, but as immortal.

Paul goes on to say in verse 23, **“And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”** The first fruits were the first ears of grain that were a promise of the coming harvest. The Spirit indwells us as the promise of something to come. He also refers to our **“adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”** Adoption as a son in biblical times was the time at which the son entered into all the prerogatives and privileges of his sonship. He was no longer a minor and was placed as a son in the family with full authority. That time for us is yet future. I am a son of God, but I have not yet entered into all the privileges and prerogatives of my sonship. That will happen in connection with the redemption of the body which is yet future.

Some are preaching that the redemption of the body is happening today. That is a lie! It is a result of twisting and distorting the Word of God. God accomplished it in the death of Christ, but the realization of it is yet in the future for us. We are awaiting the redemption of our bodies. That is the time when the curse will be removed. Not only will we have positional perfection before God, but we will also have personal perfection before Him at that time. This mortal body will be changed into a glorified body.

7. Future Removal of Suffering

Revelation 21 tells about events at the close of the Millennium, which is the first stage of the eternal kingdom. It is at that time that God will establish a new heaven and a new earth. Of that time John wrote, **“And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away”** (Revelation 21:4). It will not be until the end of the Millennium that all suffering, all crying, all heartache and all death will be gone. Some of those things will be present even in the Millennium.

During the Millennium, there will be death as the result of judgment. There will be suffering, such as rain withheld from Egypt, because of disobedience. The Son will rule with a rod of iron, and all disobedience will be punished. The psalmist wrote of conditions in that day, **“Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way”** (Psalm 2:12). When eternity comes, as recorded in Revelation 21, all of these things are removed. But this removal awaits the time when we have glorified bodies and move into eternity.

If a person says that when Christ died on the cross for our sins, He also took care of our sicknesses, then to be logical and consistent the person must also say that He took care of our physical death. If it is never God’s will for one of His children to be sick, then you must also say that it is never God’s will for one to die. The whole approach becomes nonsense.

8. Future Abolishment of Death

The Scriptures assume that believers will experience physical death unless Jesus Christ comes again before that day, even though the death of Christ has taken care of death. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, the great resurrection chapter, **“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep”** (v. 20). The “first fruits” is the guarantee that something is coming. Christ’s resurrection is the guarantee that we as believers will also be raised from the dead. This assumes that multitudes of believers are going to experience physical death. **“For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming”** (vs. 21-23).

Do not overlook the clear statement of verses 25 and 26: **“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.”** Some respond with surprise, *“I thought He conquered death!”* He has, but He has not abolished it yet; He has conquered death, but He has not done away with it. Millions of believers in Jesus Christ have died since He was raised from the dead two thousand years ago. Yet we are told that he conquered death and brought life. What does that mean? It means that He has assured us that there will be a resurrection when we will be bodily raised from the dead.

According to verse 26, the last enemy that will be destroyed is death. That is still an enemy we confront today, and we will continue to confront it right up until the time when Jesus Christ brings about resurrection and transformation.

9. Future Resurrection

Beginning in verse 42 Paul describes the glorified bodies we will have: **“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body.”** Notice that he says this physical body is perishable. Perishable bodies are put into graves. But when the resurrection of the dead occurs, those perishable bodies will be raised as imperishable bodies, no longer subject to suffering and death.

Paul continues the description of those old and new bodies in verse 43: **“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.”** This physical body is characterized by dishonor, but our resurrection bodies will be characterized by honor. He continues, **“It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”** (v. 43).

Now do you see what some do who twist and distort the Scriptures to their own destruction? They take the truth of Scripture and misuse and misapply it just as Satan did in Matthew 4. Satan quoted Scripture accurately to Christ in His temptation in the wilderness. He simply misused and misapplied it.

Some today take the truth about our resurrection body and say it ought to be true now. They say that God wants you to have a body of power, not a body of weakness. But God says this physical body is a body of weakness, and it will become a body of power when it is raised from the dead or transformed at the Rapture. We must be on guard against unlearned people who twist and distort the Scriptures.

Verse 44 speaks of a natural body and a spiritual body: **“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”** The natural body is susceptible to the suffering that natural

bodies experience.

Paul continues his argument in verses 45 to 49. **“So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”** Notice the future tense, **“shall,”** in the last phrase of verse 49.

There is no basic difference between the bodies of believers and unbelievers. When we went to South America recently, we got shots for malaria. When believers are bitten by malaria-bearing mosquitoes, they get malaria just like unbelievers do. There is no difference in their physical bodies. We could illustrate this similarity in another way. If you were to back a dump truck over a believer, it would squash him. If you were to back a dump truck over an unbeliever, you would get the same results. Believers and unbelievers have the same kind of earthly, natural, perishable bodies which are characterized by weakness.

That will change some day for believers, but that change is yet future. It is a distortion and corruption of the Scriptures to preach that the atonement takes care of physical illness. Some preach that it is not God’s will for a believer to be physically ill and that wellness is a matter of trusting Christ. They preach that when Christ died, He not only took away our sin, but He took away our illness too. If that is true, why do those preachers die? It is because they are twisting the Scriptures! The tragedy of it is that Christians are flocking to these preachers.

10. Future Glorification

Notice how Paul characterizes our present bodies in verse 50: **“Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”** We believers still have perishable bodies. But in verses 51 and 52, he tells us of a tremendous event: **“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”** Picture Jesus Christ coming in the air and calling for those who are His. All those in the grave who have believed in Him will be raised bodily. In that instant of time, those bodies will be transformed into glorified bodies which are imperishable, characterized by power and glory and suitable for eternity in God’s presence.

Immediately following that, every believer who is alive on the face of the earth will be bodily caught up to meet Jesus Christ in an atom of time. We shall experience a bodily transformation as our perishable bodies will become imperishable; our weak bodies will become bodies of power. That is what Paul is talking about when he says, **“For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality”** (v. 53). At that time, these bodies will no longer be subject to suffering, sickness and death. They will be fitted for eternity in God’s presence.

Notice the time frame given in verse 54: **“But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”** This will happen when we are caught up into His presence. The perishable will not put on the imperishable, the mortal will not put on the immortal and death will not be swallowed up in victory until we are caught up into His presence at the Rapture.

11. Removal of Illness Is Future

Where do people get the nerve to preach such trash that Christ died for the sicknesses of believers and that it is not God’s will for a believer to be sick? They did not get it from the Word of God. That is one of the doctrines of demons as described in Paul’s first letter to Timothy. Such an approach curries to the lust of the flesh and plays on its desires. Who wants to be sick? The flesh loves to hear that you do not have to suffer.

Such preachers also include the idea in their preaching that you do not have to be poor either. After all, if you are going to be healthy, you might as well have some money so you can enjoy your health! *Would the King and Lord of Glory with mansions prepared for us want us to be poor? Of course not,* they say. What a tragic corruption; what a twisting

and distorting of the Word of God. This is not just a minor difference of interpretation among believers. It is twisting, distorting and misusing the Scriptures!

It is true that Jesus Christ died and paid the penalty for all of our sins. When He did that, He also took care of all sin's ramifications which include sickness of all kinds and physical death. But the realization of that salvation in its entirety will not be ours until we are glorified in His presence, when He transforms our mortal bodies into immortal bodies, our perishable bodies into imperishable bodies.

Do I believe that healing is in the atonement? Of course I do. Sin results in sickness and death. When Christ died for sin, He took care of sickness and death. Healing is in the atonement. The overcoming of death is in the atonement. The restoration of the creation to its intended state is in the atonement. Romans 8 says that all creation groans in anticipation of our unveiling as sons, for then the curse will be lifted from creation. The desert will blossom like a rose. At that time the whole creation will be back to what God intended when He created man in the Garden of Eden. That is all in the atonement.

12. Christ Is the Messiah

In chapter 8, Matthew has been showing that Jesus is the Messiah, the all-powerful Son of God, who has power over the spirit world and over physical illness. He is showing that Jesus Christ is the One who fulfills Isaiah 53 by taking care of all diseases. This demonstrates that He is the one who takes care of sin as well, because sin is the root problem.

Matthew 9 will present a man Jesus healed. Jesus said to him in verse 2, **“Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven.”** Instead of telling him to be healed, He told him, **“Your sins are forgiven.”** He asks the question in verse 5, **“For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, and walk’?”** Jesus sees the connection between sin and healing. He is saying that when He heals the man's afflictions, He is demonstrating that He has the power over sin, because physical illness is not the issue. Sin is. Christ demonstrates that He is the One who has the power to take care of sin.

Matthew has offered irrefutable evidence that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, the Savior, the One in whom alone is found salvation for all who will believe. Have you ever seriously considered the evidence that Christ is indeed who He claimed to be? If you are to have forgiveness and hope for eternity, you must have it through Him. Apart from Him, you are in a frightful position. You are in the realm of Satan, open to his influence and to the possession of your body by demons. Christ offers the glorious transformation that will give you forgiveness and cleansing of sins right now. In that offer is the promise of a future in which you will receive a glorified body. That body will enable you to enjoy the glory of God's presence for all eternity.