

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Part 3

One of the most important prophecies in the Old Testament is **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**. The Holy Spirit leads Matthew to use this passage as the foundation of his second narrative section (**Matthew 8-9**). Matthew quotes **Isaiah 53:5** in **Matt. 8:17**. The section ends in **9:35-38** with a description of the spiritual needs of the people as sheep scattered without a shepherd, which is a connection to **Isaiah 53:6** that states that we all have gone astray like sheep. Jesus is compassionate toward us because we have gone our own way instead of following God the Shepherd. All the miracles in this section point to the purpose for Jesus coming to this world.

There are nine specific miracles in this section, and they all serve as signs that point to a spiritual meaning greater than the physical benefit. These signs are grouped together in 3's, with each group of three miracles followed by a figurative statement by Jesus that had a spiritual application; this further reinforces the spiritual purpose of the miracles and the mission of Jesus.

The first miracle was the healing of the leper (**8:1-4**). The leper had faith in the ability of Jesus to make him clean; the only question was whether Jesus was willing to make him clean. Jesus assured him not only that He was willing to heal him; He even touched the leper (something everyone else would avoid doing at all costs). The willingness of Jesus to cleanse and heal us spiritually is what we need to know about Jesus.

The second sign teaches us about the kind of faith necessary to please God (**8:5-13**). The centurion did not ask something for himself; he loved his servant who was suffering. He did not question the ability nor the willingness of Jesus to heal him. He humbly said he was not worthy that Jesus should come to his house, and that it was not necessary. Similar to his own experience, he recognized the **authority** of Jesus was in the **word** of Jesus. If Jesus just said the word, it would happen. Jesus said that his faith was greater than any He saw in Israel (and He knew the hearts of all men—**John 2:25**). Jesus did as he believed, because the centurion had what God requires from us to enter His kingdom—humility and unselfish love.

Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law by touching her. After this, many were brought to be healed by Jesus, and demons were cast out by the word of Jesus (**8:14-16**). At this point, Matthew quotes **Isaiah 53:5**. Then Jesus says to a disciple who wished to bury his father first, "*Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.*" If Jesus refers to the carnal man as spiritually dead, this is a good indication that the healing of **Isaiah 53:5** is also spiritual.

The next set of miracles also point to the authority of Jesus. He calmed the storm so that the disciples remarked that the wind and the waves **obey** Him. The demons had no choice but to submit to the authority of Jesus when He commanded them to go out of the possessed men. The third miracle (**9:1-8**) was specifically stated to be to illustrate the **authority** Jesus had to forgive sins on earth (**v.6**). This was the paralytic's most urgent and primary need (**v.2**).

As **Isaiah 53** foretold, Jesus' whole mission was to offer the sacrifice that would make forgiveness possible for us all. In the event immediately after this miracle Jesus said this was His mission, using a metaphor of a physician going to the sick, not the healthy (**9:9-13**). Repeating the spiritual application of **Isaiah 53:5**, He meant the sinners in contrast with the righteous to be called to repentance. After this, the disciples of John ask about the disciples of Jesus not fasting (**9:14-17**). Jesus said it was not yet the appropriate time for them to fast. However, the time would come when they would fast. That time would be when Jesus would fulfill **Isaiah 53** (**John 12:20-36; 16:5-22**).

The last three miracles illustrate the need for Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sin. Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus from death (**9:18-26**). He explained the temporary nature of physical death by saying that she was not dead but sleeping. Of course, the crowd did not understand His point, so they laughed Him to scorn (ridiculed Him). In the middle of this story, we also see the account of the woman who had

an issue of blood for twelve years. She believed that she could be healed just by touching the hem of Jesus' garment, and she was healed because of her faith (**v.22**).

The next sign involved two blind men asking Jesus for mercy (**9:27-31**). They expressed faith in the Lord's ability to help them, and He gave them sight. Jesus told them not to tell anyone, but they did anyway. Telling no one reminds me of **Isaiah 53:7** and fits with **Isaiah 52:15**. However, the word went out anyway (**Isaiah 52:15-53:1**).

The third miracle (**9:32-34**) illustrates how depraved man had become in their rejection of God and thus in need of a Savior. Jesus cast a demon out of a man that caused him to be mute. When he spoke, the multitude marveled, but some were so hard-hearted that they said Jesus cast out demons by the authority of the ruler of demons (**v.34**). This is how far away from God man had forsaken Him.

Jesus was aware of the spiritual needs of everyone. *He was moved with compassion* (**9:36**). They were like sheep without a shepherd (**Isaiah 53:6**). When men refuse the guidance of God, they are without purpose and direction. When we refuse the fellowship of God, we are also without peace, joy, and emotional security. Jesus uses another metaphor, this time referring to the spiritually needy as the harvest. He told the disciples to pray to the Lord of harvest to send laborers to reap. Any disciple who prays in faith for laborers will himself desire to be a laborer, since faith without works is dead. Jesus is calling His disciples to have the same compassion for His lost sheep that He has. It moved Jesus to suffer and die for our sins, it will move us to carry our crosses and bear the burdens of others, too.