

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Kingdom: A Study of Matthew 8–13

STUDY ONE

Out of the Crowd . . . a Leper!

Matthew 4:23–25; 8:1–4

Jesus' compassion was disarming and eloquent. His first response was to reach out and touch the leper.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

As we open *The King's Kingdom: A Study of Matthew 8–13*, let's take a moment to review. According to Pastor Chuck Swindoll's overview chart of Matthew on the next page, Matthew wrote his gospel to portray Jesus as the long-awaited King of the Jews, the Messiah who has come to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

The opening section, Matthew 1–4, certifies Jesus as the messianic heir to David's throne as foretold by the prophets. Consecrated at His baptism and tested in the wilderness, Jesus launched His public ministry by teaching, healing, and announcing "the Kingdom of Heaven is near" (4:17).

The next section, Matthew 5–15, begins with the Sermon on the Mount (5–7) and Jesus casting His vision of the kingdom as a spiritual movement to transform hearts, not a political movement to overthrow Rome. Having described the kingdom of God *in words* through His sermon, Jesus then displayed the kingdom of God *in deeds* through His miracles—where our current study picks up.

Today's passage begins a two-chapter collection of miracles in Matthew 8–9.¹ These signs authenticate Jesus' messianic claim and give thirsty souls a taste of the goodness of God's kingdom. The people for whom Jesus performed miracles were the most *unlikely* and *unexpected* recipients of kingdom blessings: Gentiles, the demon-possessed, the unclean, and the untouchable. What mattered most to Jesus was not their present condition but their faith. They recognized Him as the King of heaven come to earth, and, like the man with leprosy in our passage, they believed in Him with their whole hearts.



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MATTHEW

	Announcement and Arrival of the King Main Emphasis: His Credentials <u>Birth</u> <u>Baptism</u> <u>Temptation</u> CHAPTERS 1–4	Proclamation and Reception of the King Main Emphasis: His Message <u>Sermon on the Mount</u> <u>Miracles</u> <u>Discourses</u> <u>Parables</u> CHAPTERS 5–15	Opposition and Rejection of the King Main Emphasis: His Suffering and Death <u>Spread of opposition</u> <u>Preparation of disciples</u> <u>Final predictions</u> <u>Crucifixion</u> CHAPTERS 16–27	Resurrection and Triumph of the King Main Emphasis: His Conquest <u>God's power</u> <u>Great Commission</u> CHAPTER 28
The King	His identity: Israel's promised King		His destiny: "Crucify Him!"	
Scope	Teaching the vast multitudes		Teaching the Twelve	
Location	Bethlehem and Nazareth	Ministry in Galilee	Ministry in Judea	
People's Reaction	Increased popularity		Increased hostility	
Theme	Jesus is the King, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.			
Key Verses	16:16–19; 28:18–20			
Christ in Matthew	Jesus, the Messiah, fulfills the prophecies, promises, types, and expectations of the Old Testament Scriptures (16:16–19; 28:18–20).			

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open the Word, come to Jesus as the leprous man, with hands outstretched to receive the Lord's compassion.

Father, I bring to You my need. See me for who I am and take pity on me, just as Your Son took pity on the humble man with leprosy. As I open the Scriptures, I also open my heart to You and Your cleansing touch. In Jesus' name, amen.



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The closing verses of chapter 4 and the opening verses of Matthew 8 bookend the Sermon on the Mount. Read *Matthew 4:23–25* and *8:1–4*, and write down what ties these passages together.

The same Greek phrase for “large crowd” appears in 4:25 and 8:1, indicating not just a single group but many groups of people from all over the region—all needy, all seeking help. Out of these crowds, the afflicted man came alone to Jesus, parting the sea of people who drew back at the dreadful sight of him. Let’s look closer at this man’s terrible disease, his humble heart of faith, and Jesus’ remarkable act of compassion.



Observation: Encountering a Man with Leprosy

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we first observe the passage by reading carefully and slowly, absorbing every word.²



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

Just as we need tools in the kitchen to help us cook our meals, we need Bible study tools to help us feed ourselves God’s Word. An essential tool for our studies is Pastor Chuck’s two-volume commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15* and *Insights on Matthew 16–28*.³ For background study, we recommend a Bible dictionary, such as *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*.

The Man’s Condition and Action—Matthew 8:2a

Known today as Hansen’s disease, leprosy deadens nerve endings causing sufferers to unknowingly injure themselves. Years of untreated wounds, infections, and ulcerations lead to loss of limbs and irreversible decay. “It is a kind of terrible progressive death in which a man dies by inches.”⁴



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Use your resources to research *leprosy* in Bible times. Read the inset article, “Leprosy,” on page 145 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*. What do you discover?

The physical suffering was severe, but the misery of isolation was worse. According to commentator William Barclay,

Lepers were treated “as if they were, in effect, dead men.” Immediately [when] leprosy was diagnosed, the leper was absolutely and completely banished from human society. . . . The leper had to go with rent clothes, disheveled hair, with a covering upon his upper lip, and, as he went, he had to cry: “Unclean, unclean” (*Leviticus 13:45*).⁵

Try to imagine this man with leprosy making his way to Jesus. What physical, religious, and social obstacles would he have had to overcome? What news might he have heard about Jesus that filled him with determination? What actions showed he understood *who* Jesus was?



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The Man's Humble Faith—Matthew 8:2b

Observe carefully the man's statement: "Lord . . . if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean" (Matthew 8:2). What do you see? What part of this passage reveals his faith?

The Greek construction of the conditional phrase, "if you are willing," suggests that the Lord may or may not have been willing to help. And the man held no expectations. No presumptions, no bargaining. He truly believed Jesus *could* make him whole, but he never assumed that Jesus *would*. What does the man's approach say about his humble heart?

The Lord's Compassionate Response—Matthew 8:3–4

What did Jesus do that no other rabbi would have done (*Matthew 8:3*)? Also, what did Jesus do that *only* He could do?



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What do you think Jesus communicated to the man and the crowd by *touching* the leprous man? In addition, what two attributes of His nature did Jesus convey by saying, “I am willing” and “Be healed!” (Matthew 8:3)?

The sores fell away in the moment it takes to wash dirt from our arms. The man must have cried out with joy, but the Lord put a finger to His lips. How did Jesus’ instructions show respect for God’s law (8:4)?

Why did Jesus say to the man not to tell anyone? Because He was the Messiah, and the timing had to be just right for His plan. People would want to make Him their king based on His power to heal. His ministry was not only to heal but transform lives.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Our Savior’s Response to Faith

In the interpretation phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we examine the meaning of the passage. By including this account of Jesus cleansing the man of leprosy, Matthew intended his original readers to learn certain truths.



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What do we learn about the person of Jesus? For insight, consult Pastor Chuck's, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, pages 144–45.

What do we learn from the example of the man's faith and approach to Jesus?

Matthew didn't use the Greek word for "heal" in reference to leprosy, rather, *katharizō*, which means "cleanse." Read *Matthew 10:7–8* and *11:4–5* in the New American Standard Bible to see how the word *cleansed* is used specifically with leprosy.

Leprosy is often compared to sin in Scripture, and just as Jesus cleansed the man of His leprosy, "the blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Let's look deeper into this connection between cleansing of leprosy and cleansing of sin.



Correlation: The Contrite Heart and Cleansing of Sin

By correlating our passage with similar passages, we can confirm our interpretation and gain a broader understanding of God's Word. Jesus told the cleansed man to go to the priest for ceremonial purification, in accordance with the protocols of the Mosaic law.



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Leviticus 14:1–9 describes the process for ceremonial purification for the people of Israel, and *14:10–32* outlines the intricate details for making offerings to the Lord. Scan these complex requirements to get an idea of what was required for purification. And then, against this backdrop, read David's psalm of contrition and plea for God to cleanse him from his sin in *Psalms 51*.

What does *51:1–2, 7–10* say about how God cleanses us?

What does God desire from us when we sin, according to *51:16–17*?

As David declared, God will never “reject a broken and repentant heart” (Psalm 51:17)!

What makes a contrite heart such a beautiful sacrifice to God? It makes no demands. It nurses no blame or grudges. It entertains no expectations. It offers no conditions. It anticipates no favors. It is the attitude God loves! And that's the attitude of the leprous man. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Understanding the Principles

Leprosy has long been a poignant illustration of sin's wasting effects in a person's life. Pastor Chuck offers three reassuring principles to take away from this study.

- First, *the magnetic presence of Jesus draws us closer to Him*. He doesn't reject us because of our shameful condition. Whoever comes to Him with a contrite heart will hear the Lord saying, "Come near."
- Second, *the quiet compassion of Jesus invites us to ask Him for relief*. When we know that the Lord will not shame us, we are free to state with confidence that we believe He can cleanse us.
- Third, *the transforming touch of Jesus changes us deep within*. Sinful people can't defile Jesus. He purifies sinful people with His transformative touch.

Take a few moments of quiet reflection to let these principles sink in. What is your need for the Savior's cleansing touch? In what ways can you invite Him to purify your life?

Jesus came to touch the untouchables and to offer the Father's cup of compassion to the parched lips of humanity. Drink deeply as the love of God cleanses your soul.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, just as death's tentacles had grabbed hold of the body of the man with leprosy so can the power of sin bind the human soul. Thankfully, Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted, release captives from their guilt, and cleanse the poor sinner's shame. I cling to nothing as I come to the cross with my hands open to receive His mercy, grace, love, and purifying power. In His name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. The miracles appear in groups of three. The first group is cleansing the leprosy man (Matthew 8:1–4), healing the centurion's servant (8:5–13), and healing Peter's mother-in-law and others (8:14–17); the second group is calming the sea (8:23–27), casting out demons from the two Gadarenes (8:28–34), and healing the paralytic (9:1–8); the third group is healing the woman and raising the official's daughter (9:18–26), healing two blind men (9:27–31), and casting out a demon from the mute man (9:32–34).
2. For helpful instruction from Pastor Chuck, consult our online instructional web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)." This page provides you an introduction to four important skills in Bible study—observation, interpretation, correlation, and application—along with other helpful study tips. You can also follow the link to purchase a copy of Pastor Chuck's book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, on which our studies are based.
3. Other tools we recommend are a whole-Bible commentary, such as the two-volume *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* and *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. Versions of the Bible are available at BibleGateway.com, and an excellent online Bible commentary by Thomas L. Constable is at netbible.org.
4. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, rev. ed., The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 295.
5. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 295–96.



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**SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES**

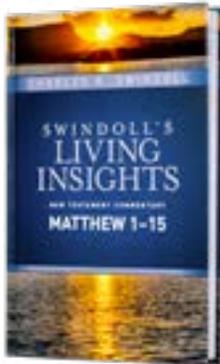
STUDY

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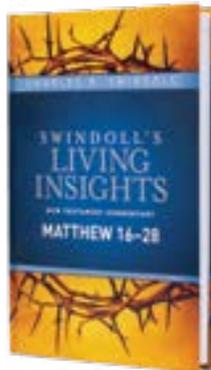
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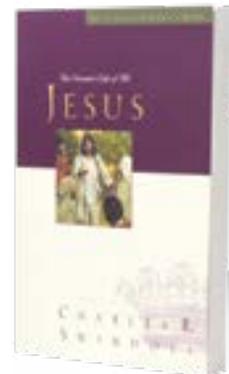
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2021 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Studies, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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