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"AND HE HEALED MANY THAT WERE SICK."

– *MARCH 4. – MARK 1:21-34. –*

JESUS made Capernaum his home and the center of his work in Galilee for a considerable time. It will be remembered that it was here that the Roman centurion, whose servant Jesus healed, lived, of whom the Jews testified that he was a friend of their nation, and had built them a synagogue or house of worship and Bible study. (Luke 7:5.) Some ruins in that vicinity have recently been exhumed, which are supposed by scholars to be the remains of this synagogue, because they seem to be on the site of Capernaum, and represent the most substantial synagogue structure in all that region, the walls being ten feet thick, seventy-four feet nine inches long, and [R2581 : page 58] fifty-six feet nine inches wide, with a roof supported by four rows of columns.

As indicating our Lord's strict attention to the Father's business, we have the statement that "straightway," at once, on arriving at Capernaum from Nazareth, our Lord went into the synagogue (probably the one built by the centurion), and began his teaching. This reads peculiarly at the present day, when custom has completely barricaded every opportunity for free expression of opinion in almost all places devoted to worship. The Jewish arrangement was certainly a liberal one, and every way favorable to the truth, because whatever errors might creep in, the truth always had an opportunity for challenging them and exposing their weaknesses and referring to the divinely inspired oracles. Who can doubt that if we had just such simplicity or arrangements to-day, by which truth could challenge the various errors which have crept into all sectarian teaching, the result would be favorable – not favorable to sectarian systems, it is true, but favorable to the establishment of each individual in the truth, as presented in the divine oracles.

The people who heard our Lord's discourse were astonished. (1) At the things which he taught, and (2) at the manner in which he presented them. He taught with authority, that is to say, our Lord had a clear understanding of the subjects he handled, and his presentations were not vague suppositions and imaginations, and foundationless hopes and speculations; but were clear-cut and distinct, and well proven by the testimonies of the Law and the Prophets, so that they were conclusive in the minds of his hearers, who hitherto had been used to hearing the scribes guess, wonder, suppose, etc. Since the Lord has not seen fit to provide us with even a condensed statement of his discourse, it implies that a full knowledge of it would not be specially advantageous to us. However, a hint or inference respecting a portion of the sermon is furnished in the statement that during its progress a man present, possessed by an unclean spirit, cried out – evidently opposing something Jesus had said, saying, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?"

The clear inference is that Jesus had been speaking against sin, and the power which it exercised over humanity, involving all in the death penalty, with its sickness and pain and trouble; and incidentally no doubt he had mentioned demoniacal possession, so common at that time – and more common to-day than most people suppose. It is our guess that the gospel preached at Capernaum must have followed somewhat similar lines to the gospel preached at Nazareth, declaring the time at hand in which God would be pleased to receive back into harmony with himself those who had been alienated through sin, and who had thus been brought under the bondage of corruption. He no doubt declared himself to be the great Life-giver, the Good Physician, sent to heal earth's woes and to reveal to mankind the Heavenly Father, and to become to as many as would avail themselves of it, "the Way, the Truth and the Life," by which they might return to divine favor in fullest measure. The language of the evil spirit, speaking through the man as its mouthpiece,* clearly implies that these fallen spirits had at least a general understanding of the time when their evil course would

be run, and that they knew that the just wages of their sinful course is destruction – not eternal torment. They recognized Jesus and his mission and his holiness, and that he was the representative of the Heavenly Father, but they had no hope for themselves – no expectation other than that when the time should come they would be utterly destroyed, annihilated. From various Scriptures, however, we learn that these fallen angels, demons, wicked spirits, will not be destroyed without first being given an opportunity for repentance and reconciliation with God.*

**See [What Say the Scriptures About Spiritualism?](#) – Price 10 cents, this office.*

Our Lord did not deign to hold conversation with these spirit beings, who had fallen under the ban of divine condemnation, and with whom the Heavenly **[R2582 : page 58]** Father could no longer have intercourse. He did not, therefore, explain to them that his first advent was merely to pay the ransom price, and to start the gospel message which would select the "little flock" to be members of his "body" and joint-heirs with him in the Kingdom, that when complete and glorified should bless and judge the world and judge the fallen angels also. (1 Corinthians 6:3.) And our Lord's course in having nothing whatever to do with these fallen spirits, but on the contrary commanding them to hold their peace, should be a lesson to every one of his followers, who should seek in this and in every other matter to walk in his steps. We have known some to get themselves into serious difficulties through curiosity – which led them either to spiritualistic seances or to privately have communication with these fallen ones. Their cunning and deceitfulness is far too deep for humanity, and he who seeks communion with them in any manner or degree does so in violation, not only of the Scriptural command (Lev. 20:6; Isa. 8:19), but in violation also of Jesus' example; and such run great risk of thus being entrapped and falling from their own steadfastness. The Apostle gives us to understand that even unwillingly and unwittingly we frequently wrestle, not with flesh and blood, but with these evil spirits, who inspire and use fallen fellow-creatures. – Eph. 6:12.

The unclean spirit "tore" the man in coming out, that is, caused violent convulsions, and used the man's mouth in uttering a loud cry. Our Lord, of course, could have forbidden such manifestations of the demon spirit, but preferred to allow it to be so, that thus might be manifested the malignant disposition of the evil spirits, as well as the power of his command which, with all their malignity, they could not disobey. The effect of the miracle upon the audience of course was wonderful. They saw "the man Christ Jesus" exercising in their very presence a superhuman power – controlling spirit beings. No wonder they were amazed, and no wonder his fame spread throughout all Galilee.

Leaving the synagogue, our Lord, accompanied by James and John, went with Simon Peter and Andrew, his brother, to their home, where Peter's mother-in-law lay sick of a fever. Jesus visited her, and "rebuked the fever," took her by the hand and helped her up (Luke 4:39), and immediately the fever was **[R2582 : page 59]** gone, and even the usually accompanying prostration of strength did not remain, but on the contrary, she was able to entertain and serve her company.

The fame of Jesus spread rapidly, and at sundown, in the cool of the day, many sick were brought to him to be healed, and many possessed of devils, to have the evil spirits cast out. The concourse was a great one, from all parts of the city, and again our Lord manifested his mercy in healing ailments, and casting out demons; again, however, refusing to converse with the demons and even refusing and forbidding their giving testimony respecting him. Praise and commendation from an evil source are never to be desired.

The question naturally arises, Why did the Lord perform such miracles? If they were merely from benevolence and with a desire to help the afflicted, why did he not do more of them? – for instance, in the city of Nazareth, regardless of the condition of the hearts of those who were afflicted. Why did he not at one word rebuke all the fevers and all the other diseases which afflicted humanity, throughout the

whole of Galilee, the whole of Palestine, the whole of Asia, the whole of Africa, the whole of Europe, and the whole of America? Quite evidently the performance of these miracles was not merely from benevolence toward mankind.

Indeed, we have reason to question whether or not it would be a benevolent act to cure all the ills of humanity in the present time. The aches and pains, the troubles and sorrows, of humanity are in many senses of the word blessings in disguise, just as was the part of the original sentence of Adam, which declares: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." He who succeeds in avoiding the earning of his daily food by some kind of toil has succeeded in placing himself in an unfavorable condition, for idleness is not only the mother of vice, but the father of discontent. Similarly, there is a ministry of instruction in sickness and trouble which should not be overlooked. The Prophet refers to this blessing that inheres in tribulation, saying, "Before I was afflicted I went astray;" and many of the Lord's people can if they will trace some of their greatest blessings and greatest helps in the development of true character to their experiences in various kinds of troubles and disease. Note where we will throughout the world the finest and the noblest and the best balanced characters, and trace these characters in their development, and we find that much of the chiseling and polishing which has made them what they are was done by affliction of one kind or another – guided, if they were consecrated Christians – by the unseen hand of Providence.

The miracles which our Lord performed in the little country of Palestine, by which a small proportion of their sick were relieved temporarily, was merely a prophecy of the great healing blessing, freeing from the power of Satan and sin, which he preached, and which is to be fulfilled in due time – during his Millennial Kingdom.

His object in performing these miracles was not, however, merely to thus prophesy the future and greater universal blessings of his reign, but more particularly as signs, as evidences, as witnesses respecting

his teachings. It was his doctrines or teachings that were to move men; so that as the power of God these might draw to him that certain class which the Father has given him during this age. If he would utter things respecting a heavenly condition, a birth of the spirit to a spirit nature, a spirit kingdom, etc., it would be eminently proper for any hearer to enquire respecting his authority for making such statements and promises, unknown to others and unproven from any earthly standpoint. It was therefore proper that our Lord should anticipate such enquiries respecting his authority for his teachings by giving miraculous demonstrations of his superhuman power, which he explained to be of the Father and witnessing to his integrity.

But someone may say, If such miraculous manifestations were proper and reasonable to the generation in personal contact with our Lord, why would not similar miracles be proper and reasonable for us of the present time, and for others all down through the Gospel age? We reply that some evidences, proofs or miracles would be proper now, and that greater miracles are before us to-day, as witnesses to the truth of Christianity. These are not of the same order as those which introduced the Gospel age in the "harvest" or end of the Jewish age; they are, indeed, of a far higher order, and more in harmony with the age in which we live. They are none the less real than the miracles of Jesus' day, though they may be less obtrusive and less likely to be noticed, except as attention shall be called to them. Our Lord seems to refer to these present-day miracles when he said to his disciples, "Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." – Jno. 14:12.

Which is the greater work – the opening of the eyes of the naturally blind, or the opening of the eyes of the understanding? Which is the more valuable? In the end of the Jewish age our Lord healed eyes that were blinded either by accident or poison or a sting or what not, and that was a miracle, but to-day the Lord's disciples, under the guidance of the holy spirit, and through it, are able in many instances to open the eyes of the understanding, that those who are

blind to spiritual things might see them – and this blindness, the Apostle tells us, is not a mere trifling thing of accident or sting, but is the skillful and intentional injury of the mental eye by the god of this world, Satan. (2 Cor. 4:4.) Do we not, therefore, see many more miracles of this kind – the opening of the eyes of the understanding with the eye-salve of the truth in this harvest-time of the Gospel age – than are recorded of the natural sight restoration amongst the Israelites in the harvest of the Jewish age? And which is the more serious of the two blindnesses? Whether would we prefer to be blind naturally or to be blind to the spiritual things? Whether, therefore, is it the greater miracle to be relieved of natural blindness or to be relieved of spiritual darkness? Undoubtedly the latter.

Similarly with all the diseases, we might draw parallels and find these the greater miracles. Peter's mother-in-law was being consumed with a fever which the word of the Lord rebuked. But how many men and how many women throughout Christendom to-day are being consumed of a fever of ambition or **[R2582 : page 60]** pride or discontent, to whom the word of the Lord comes, through some of the household of faith, speaking peace, release from burdensome anxiety and cares of this life, lust for riches, and consuming ambitions and pride of life? How many have been restored to normal conditions and granted to have the peace of God ruling in their hearts, with thankfulness, and how many such have found their strength renewed, so that being released from these fevers they arose to do vigorously the Lord's business, to minister, to serve, the Lord and his "brethren." Similarly also we might trace the lamenesses and impotencies of the past, and find analogies in the present – dead hands, worse than dead, used actively in the service of evil, have been recovered for activity in the service of the Lord; men and women dead in trespasses and sins, awakened to newness of life in the service of the Lord and of the truth. Such miracles as these, far greater than the ones of Jesus' day in the flesh. He is now performing through his willing servants and handmaidens, and these are the greatest witnesses imaginable to the

reality of the Lord's gracious message that he is the Sent of God, to bring **[R2583 : page 60]** blessing and salvation to our race.

The transformations of life and character, hopes and aims, by which some in the present time are blessed, like the physical healings in the harvest time of the Jewish age, are prophecies of what the grace of God can and will do for humanity when God's due time shall come, when his Kingdom shall come, and through its administration of love and justice his will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven. He who can see now the earthly blessings and healings, accomplished by our Lord, were but foretastes of the coming general blessings to be accomplished during the Millennium, should be able also to see that the regenerations of heart and transformations of character now in progress in the "elect" church are merely foretastes or a first-fruits, illustrative of the blessings of transformed character which the Kingdom will accomplish for all who will come into subjection to its righteous arrangements.
