

## **SIN AND SICKNESS RELATED**

### **- MATTHEW 9:1-13. - MARCH 20. -**

**Golden Text: – "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." – V. 6.**

JESUS left the country of the Gergesenes at their request, because they feared that other healings of obsessed people might destroy other herds of swine, the chief industry of that place. He came by boat to his own city of Capernaum, where most of his mighty works were done. The people thronged about him and soon he was busy preaching to a houseful about the love and mercy of God and the duty and responsibility of man. The house was of the ordinary type of one story, with large tiles constituting the roof and with outside stairs leading thereto. Presently a paralytic borne upon a stretcher was brought by his friends that the Lord might heal him. They could not enter because of the multitude which filled the room and extended into the court. In their earnestness they climbed the stairs, removed the large stone tiling near the center of the house and let the man on the stretcher down in front of the Savior. It was not necessary to explain or to entreat. The Great Physician's heart went out in loving sympathy. He recognized the prayer of faith and answered it at once, but not as might have been expected.

To teach a great lesson respecting the relationship between sin and sickness, and to show himself powerful to deliver them both, he said to the sick man, "Son, be of good cheer. Thy sins be forgiven thee"! Possibly the palsied man and his friends may have felt disappointed. Like many of our day they may have appreciated the loaves and fishes and healings accomplished by our Lord more than they were able to appreciate his work as a Redeemer, the Sin-Bearer, the one through whom comes forgiveness of sins.

But there were present some very religious people learned in the Law, who understood that transgression of the Divine Law could not be forgiven, except by the satisfaction of that Law. When these in their hearts began to murmur, Jesus knew it and said aloud, "Which is easier – to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" The Master would have his critics see that even they without authority could say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, and none have power to know on the subject. But they could not heal the man and dare not say to him, Arise and walk. He thus convinced them that what they had thought the more difficult was really the easier, and that the one who could say the latter could doubtless truthfully say the former. Then, turning to the sick man, Jesus said, "Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house" – and he did so.

On a very similar occasion the Scriptures tell us that our Lord said to the healed one, "Go thy way and sin no more, lest a worse thing fall upon thee." In these words our Lord indicated a relationship existing between sin and sickness. The more we consider the subject the more we are assured of this. Sickness is so much of death working in us toward completion. Before the death sentence came there was no sickness. After the Redeemer shall, during the Millennium, have put away sin, the time will come, we are sure, when "there shall be no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying." Not only so, but do we not all recognize that the dying we have inherited from father Adam has come to us down through the ages along the lines of mental, moral and physical sickness, impairment of function? And do not all recognize that to whatever extent sin is indulged in willingly, the effect is not only moral abasement, but an increase of disease, sickness – death working in us?

The Jews were under the Law Covenant of ***DO AND LIVE*** and hence the forgiveness of sins with them would imply proportionate release from sin's infirmities, under the New Covenant during the Millennium. (Jer. 31:31.) When the glorified

Christ shall in the end of this age antitypically sprinkle the mercy-seat with the virtue of his secondary sacrifice it will not be for the Church, as at first, but for the world, "for all the people." (Lev. 16:33.) With the Church of this Gospel Age the Divine programme is different. Received under the Abrahamic Covenant the forgiveness of their sins is associated with their Consecration Vow to sacrifice the earthly life and all its interests for the attainment of the heavenly life and joint-heirship with the Redeemer in his Kingdom. Hence the forgiveness of sins does not mean to the Church release from physical ailments.

It was shortly after this that Matthew, elsewhere styled Levi, was called to be one of the twelve Apostles. He was a publican – that is to say, a collector of taxes for the Roman government. Publicans were despised for two reasons: –

(1) It was considered very disreputable to assist a foreign government to collect taxes from one's friends – kin.

(2) Many of these publicans were rascally and took advantage of their position to make themselves wealthy through bribes, over-collections, etc. We may be sure that Matthew-Levi was not of the dishonest type, else he never would have been called to association with Messiah as one of his Apostles and prospective joint-heirs with him in his Kingdom. For such position the highest degree of honesty is requisite. And if Jesus would never call a dishonest man, neither would a dishonest man have accepted his call, because there was nothing to be gained – neither reputation, wages nor fraud. Similarly Zaccheus was an honest publican who proffered to restore fourfold to anyone he had wronged, thus emphasizing the fact that he would not want to be dishonest.

Other Scriptures intimate that Matthew at once made a supper for his friends and acquaintances, that these might thus have the better opportunity for acquaintance with the Lord, who also was a guest. But the Pharisees, cynical and critical and fault-finding,

objected that if Jesus were righteous he would not be found in such company. Our Lord, however, sent them word that not the healthy, but the sick need a physician, intimating that for this reason he was fellowshiping sinners, that he might do them good. He was not descending to sin in any form, but seeking to lift up sinners. Then he quoted to them from his wonderful memory the words from Hosea the Prophet, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice." (Hosea 6:6.) He tells them that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Note a lesson for ourselves and for all: "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Romans 3:10.) All are sinners. All have come short of the Divine standard of perfection. Whoever, therefore, claims that he is righteous and on that score rejects the Redeemer is a hypocrite – in a wrong condition of mind, not ready for any of the blessings God now has to bestow.

God is calling none to discipleship with Jesus, except such as acknowledge that by nature they were children of wrath and who first accept forgiveness of sins through the precious blood.

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