

Matthew, chapter 8-9
Jesus' Kingdom Authority in Word and Work

Jesus proceeds from teaching His foundational Kingdom principles to now demonstrating His Kingdom Authority in both His words and works by miracles and applications

CONTEXT & MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

1 / Before we begin analyzing the contents of **chapters 8-9**, let's step back and get the bird's-eye, panoramic vision of how this section fits in with Matthew's larger themes and writing plan. What Matthew wants to show in his Gospel narrative will be summed up in Jesus' final charge and commission to His disciples in **ch 28.16-20**: [1] Jesus Christ has been given **all authority in Heaven and on earth**—He is the sovereign and indisputable King of His Kingdom—**Royal Son of David**; [2] Jesus Christ has come to earth to inaugurate the eternal Kingdom—**the Kingdom of Heaven**—here in our space and time; [3] Jesus Christ has come to redeem His covenant Kingdom people [disciples]—not just from among the Israelites, but also many from among the Gentiles, as the **Son of Abraham** (see **Genesis 12.1-3**); [4] Jesus Christ will then command His disciples to “**go and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.**” So, then, the contents of Matthew's Gospel will lay out Jesus' identity as the King of His Kingdom, and then give us accounts of Jesus' teachings—all of which will be confirmed by the miraculous Kingdom works that Jesus did [see **Acts 1.1-3**].

2 / That brings us to our present lesson passage, **chs 8-9**. After introducing Jesus to us in **chs 1-4** in all His Divine and covenantal identities [Son of David, Son of Abraham, Immanuel, Savior/Redeemer, etc], then Matthew records for us the first of five major teaching discourses that Jesus will deliver over the course of His disciple-making ministry [**chs 5-7**]. Also, these two **chapters 8-9** will serve as a ‘bridge,’ segue, or transition to the next major discourse in **ch 10**.

3 / Not only that—but these two chapters will give us numerous demonstrations and illustrations of one of the major themes of The Sermon on the Mount—Jesus' **authority**. Matthew records that Jesus' **authority** was one of the most impressive takeaways that His hearers noted: “**And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He was teaching them as one who had authority** [innate, inherent, native, in Himself], **and not as their scribes**” [**ch 7.28-29**] Matthew wants us to see and hear that. Because everything that Jesus will do in Matthew's following accounts will confirm, illustrate, and demonstrate Jesus' **authority** over every facet, theater, and element of creation **in Heaven and on earth—every other ‘authority.’** We will point out and highlight some of these exercises of **authority** as we survey and summarize the contents of these two chapters [**e. g., look at the testimony of the Gentile Roman centurion in ch 8.5-13; also 9.6, 8**].

4 / ALSO, in addition to and in expansion of that theme of **authority**, Matthew will also highlight how Jesus' **Kingdom authority** is not only in His *works [miracles]*, but also in His *words*. Again, this was one of the major themes and takeaways from **chs 5-7**, but also numerous times in these works demonstrations, Jesus will enact and exercise His **authority** by a *word*—He will simply ‘**say the word**’ and the work will be done. And, again, the Gentile centurion explicitly expressed this recognition and conviction in Jesus' **authority** when he said, “**but only say the word, and my servant will be healed**” [**ch 8.8**].

5 / So, here's how we will break down and approach this large and full lesson passage: these two chapters will break down into three sub-sections [**8.1-22; 8.23—9.17; 9.18-38**]. Each of the sub-sections will relate the accounts of some miracles Jesus performed over numerous needs and powers as He exercises and demonstrates His **Kingdom Authority**. There are at least ten specific miracles, with two miracles imbedded in **ch 9.18-26**, and **many** more included in **ch 8.16-17**. Then, each section will be followed by an application encounter and conversation—or what I call ‘teaching moments.’

6 / I will outline and itemize the three sections as we go along...

I | ch 8.1-22 | Miracles and Conversations

1 / **ch 8.1-4 | Jesus cleanses a leper with a touch and a word. Jesus has Kingdom Authority and power over physical diseases.** This miracle and act of compassion and grace is significant on so many levels: [1] ‘Leprosy’ was a broad term used to describe a number of skin disorders—but all of which rendered the afflicted as ceremonially and socially ‘unclean,’ untouchable, and ostracized from society and the community; [2] The leper would have been shunned by the others as he approached Jesus since contact with him would also render anyone who touched him ‘unclean’; [3] He modeled the faith and confidence in Jesus as the **Royal ‘Son of David’** as the examples following will also express—which Jesus always honored; [4] Jesus was willing to reach out and touch him and demonstrated His Royal **authority** to not only heal him...but also restore and reinstate him into the community. [5] *This miracle sets the redemptive pattern—that Jesus came not only to restore physical health and well-being, but more importantly, to restore mankind back to God’s creation design of wholeness and reconciliation with God.*

2 / **ch 8.5-13 | Jesus heals the beloved servant of a Gentile Roman centurion...with only a word of authority. Jesus’ Kingdom Authority reaches also into the Gentile world.** This Roman centurion [commander of ~100 soldiers] was a social pariah, not only because he was a Gentile, but also because he was a member of the ‘oppressor’ class. However, **Luke 7.1-10** reveals that he was an exception inasmuch as he had been a benefactor to his Jewish community. Matthew provides commentary into his thematic purpose of Jesus’ **Kingdom Authority** by relating the confession of the Gentile Roman centurion to Jesus’ **authority** and ability to heal with **only say the word**—which Jesus does. Jesus also uses this opportunity to proclaim the universal outreach of the **Kingdom of Heaven** which will include **many who will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob....** We call this the ‘*Eschatological Messianic Feast.*’ It is fulfilled in **Revelation 7.9-17 and 19.6-10.**

3 / **ch 8.14-17 | Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law with a touch.** Since Peter lived in Bethsaida, about five miles E of Capernaum [**John 1.44**], this miracle would have occurred there. Jesus again heals with a touch of Divine power and life. She serves to teach us that we should use every grace of life, health, and well-being—especially deliverances—to serve Jesus. ALSO, there was another mass influx and convergence of “**many who were oppressed by demons, and He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.**” Matthew gives us another OT Messianic quotation from **Isaiah 53.4:** “**This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.’**” We must interpret this by the whole context of **Isaiah 53** which is a prophetic message of redemption from our sins. But since all sicknesses, diseases—indeed all our human ‘brokennesses’—are the results of our sin against God, Jesus illustrates His comprehensive redemption and reconciliation of the creation back to God by healing our physical afflictions by His **Kingdom Authority** as a ‘foretaste’ of the universal restoration [**see Romans 8.18-25; Colossians 1.20; 1 Peter 2.24-25; Isaiah 35.5-6; et. al.**].

4 / **ch 8.18-22 | Conversation/Teaching Moment: Jesus instructs a scribe and ‘another of the disciples’ about the cost of unconditional surrender to Jesus’ authority.** We don’t serve Jesus on our conditional terms—we must submit, surrender, and obey His unconditional call to forsake and abandon all to follow and serve Him.

II | ch 8.23—9.17 | More Miracles and Conversations

1 / **ch 8.23-27 | Jesus quiets the life-threatening storm at sea with only a word of ‘rebuke.’** This was a real storm. And these disciples, being seasoned and experienced fishermen, were genuinely terrified and afraid they were going to die. Jesus stilled the storm with a word, causing His disciples to marvel further at Jesus’ **authority to command the creation elements.** See also **Luke 8.25:** “...He commands...”

2 / **ch 8.28-34 | Jesus exorcises demons from two possessed men by commanding them with a word of authority. Jesus’ Kingdom Authority is over the demonic world of darkness. AND, since this region**

was a Gentile region [hence the pigs], Jesus proclaims His desire to ‘go into all the world.’ This event also serves to illustrate here early on in Matthew that Jesus will not be welcome everywhere He goes. They were more interested in their personal and financial economies than the advancement of **The Kingdom of Heaven.**

3 / ch 9.1-8 | Jesus heals a paralyzed man after first forgiving him of his sins—doing both acts with His ‘authority on earth’ to act as God. Matthew brings us back across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. This is the story of the paralytic’s friends taking him up on the flat roof of the house, ‘unroofing’ the roof, and lowering the disabled paralytic down into the room where Jesus was teaching [Mark 2.1-4]. Jesus both first forgives the paralytic of his sins and then restores his physical strength and ability to walk again with a word of **authority**. Once again, Matthew relates the verbal exchanges between Jesus and **some of the scribes** who were accusing Jesus of blasphemy because He exercised the God-only prerogative of forgiving sins. Since Jesus is God and has **all authority in Heaven and on earth**, it is equally ‘easy’ for Him to exercise that **authority on earth** to do both. **“When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.”**

4 / ch 9.9-13 | Conversation/Teaching Moment: Jesus calls Matthew [the writer of our narrative] to follow Him as a disciple. Remember, they are in Capernaum, which was a commercial city and at a crossroads of travel and commerce. Matthew [Levi], a Jew, served as a hired tax/toll collector for the Romans to collect taxes from his fellow Jews [see Luke 19.1-10 (Zacchaeus)]. So, this was not a ‘cold encounter.’ Matthew was not a total stranger, but would have been familiar with Jesus’ presence and reports of His teachings. But Jesus calls this another social outcast, ‘untouchable,’ and pariah to follow Him as His disciple. Matthew responds immediately and unconditionally—and also throws a party and invites all his fellow **tax collectors and sinners** to come and meet Jesus. Jesus gladly responds. However, Matthew introduces us to the early opposition of the Jewish religious ruling class who see this and begin to confront His disciples with this prohibited association: **“Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”** This embryonic opposition will keep growing throughout Jesus’ ministry until they crucify Him in the end. But Jesus boldly quotes from **Hosea 6.6: “for I desire steadfast love [mercy] and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”** Meaning, His mission was not to conform to the to the preferences and protocols of the religious self-righteous, but rather to show compassion and redeeming mercy to those who genuinely need it—and know they need it.

5 / ch 9.14-18 | Another Conversation/Teaching Moment: Questions about fasting—or not—arise and are answered by Jesus to justify His ‘eating with sinners.’ This conversation comes up because the disciples of John the Baptist [and also the Pharisees] fasted regularly, often, and scrupulously—and here is Jesus and His disciples feasting...and that, in the company of those whom they wouldn’t associate with. Why is that? Jesus again comes back to the theme of the ‘eschatological Messianic feast’ that He has come to inaugurate [see ch 8.11 above; also compare with John 2.1-11]. Jesus proclaims and exclaims here that His presence among them is the ‘hors d’oeuvres’ of that great celebration—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. He has come as the Heavenly Bridegroom to begin the wedding and marriage of His redemptive Bride to Himself. How can He require His disciples to fast when He has come to announce the feast? That just doesn’t make sense—it is not appropriate—like patching old, stretched-out, worn fabric with a new, unshrunk patch ... or putting still-fermenting new wine into an old already stretched-out wineskin. His **Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven** is ‘**new wine**’ to be put into a ‘**fresh wineskin**.’ However, after He is **taken away from them**—crucified, risen, and ascended back into Heaven—there will be time and occasion for us to fast on behalf of the Kingdom.

III | ch 9.18-38 | Still More Miracles and Conversations—with a charge and challenge from Jesus that will set up His next major Discourse #2 in chapter 10

1 / ch 9.18-26 | Jesus performs two miracles [one interrupting the other] to demonstrate His authority even over death. Again, Jesus responds to two requests for His Divine healing—and again, from death and social, ceremonial uncleanness. The previous conversations about fasting were interrupted by the frantic supplications of a synagogue leader ['ruler'] to come and heal his daughter—which, in turn, was itself interrupted by the poor woman who had suffered for twelve years with a chronic hemorrhaging of blood. The synagogue ruler's twelve-year-old daughter [Mark 5.42] had just died, but he trusted in Jesus' **Kingdom Authority** to raise her from death. Jesus turns to go with His disciples to his house. They are being thronged by the crowds. This woman who has exhausted her health, strength, and well-being [and her finances (Mark 5.26; Luke 8.43)] made her way to Jesus from behind. She was undoubtedly known to her neighbors who would also know of her physical afflictions. AND, she, too, would have been banned and shunned from social contact and interactions because of her ceremonial uncleanness [Leviticus 15.25-28]. Anyone who touched her or was touched by her would have been 'unclean.' But, she, too, is desperate. Jesus is her last remaining hope of healing and restoration. She has enough confidence in His **Kingdom Authority** and saving grace that she is willing to risk everything to get to Him. But, she doesn't want to presume to 'impose' herself onto Jesus; so she sneaks up behind Him to touch the fringe, or the tassels, on the hem of His tunic. She was healed immediately, "**and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease**" [Mark 5.29]. Jesus is aware of her presence and act of faith, "**perceiving in Himself that power had gone out from Him**" [Mark 5.30].

2 / ch 9.27-31 | Jesus heals two blind men according to their faith—confidence in His authority and grace. When these two blind men approach Jesus with their appeal: "**Have mercy on us, Son of David!**", they are recognizing and confessing Jesus' **Kingdom Authority** as the promised, Messianic Son of David who would come to rule over God's Kingdom [see 2 Samuel 7 and Matthew 1.1]. He grants their desires "**according to your faith**"—their belief and confidence in His **Kingdom Authority**.

3 / ch 9.32-34 | Jesus exorcises a demon that was causing physical muteness. Some came to Jesus on their volition; others were **brought to Him** by others. As we have seen in ch 8.16-17, all of our sicknesses, afflictions, diseases, and disorders are in some way consequential to our original sin and fallen natures. But some maladies are the direct result of some specific sin or the oppression of demon spirits of the kingdom of darkness. This is one such example. This man was a **demon-possessed man who was mute**. Once again, as we have seen numerous times already just in this lesson passage, Jesus exercises His **Kingdom Authority** over the demonic spirit world as Jesus liberates the man from the demon spirit and restores his ability to talk again. Another illustration of Jesus' mission to restore the creation to wholeness. And also, and again, Matthew records the growing displeasure of the religious ruling class and their opposition to Jesus' threats to their own self-assumed *authority* and control over the people.

4 / ch 9.35-38 | Conversation/Teaching Moment: Jesus continues His widespread ministry of teaching and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and "healing every disease and every affliction" ... and challenges His disciples to embrace His same Kingdom burden and mission. Matthew concludes this portion of his narrative by repeating Jesus' itinerary as in ch 4.23. In fact, in Matthew's writing plan, these two repetitions constitute an '*inclusio*,' or 'book-ends.' We should read **chs 4.23—9.38** as a 'chapter' of the whole Gospel narrative. And the theme of the 'chapter' has been how Jesus proclaimed His **Kingdom Authority** both in *word* [Sermon on the Mount, 7.28] and in His *works* [chs 8-9]. Matthew then will conclude this 'chapter' by drawing our attention once again to the 'crowds' [4.25; 5.1; 7.28; 8.1, 18; 9.33, 36]. When Jesus sees these **crowds** [5.1; 9.36], He sees lost sheep who have no shepherd [or 'shepherds' who only abuse them for their own ends (Ezekiel 34.5-6)], and He has compassion on them. He has come to seek and save them. Jesus laments to His disciples that "**The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.**" He calls us to care as He cares, and to minister to them as He does—all the while **praying earnestly** for His **Kingdom Authority**. Beginning in **ch 10**, Jesus will further train them to do just that!