

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 9 (PART 1)

MATTHEW 9:1-8 - JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC

A PARALYTIC IS SOMEONE WHO IS EXPERIENCING SOME SORT OF PHYSICAL PARALYSIS. FROM THE STORY IT SEEMS THIS PERSON WAS UNABLE TO WALK.

"WHICH ONE IS EASIER?" - PRESUMABLY THE ANSWER IS HEALING A PARALYTIC. ANYONE CAN SAY THE WORDS "YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN". JESUS PROVES THAT HE HAS THE AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS BY HEALING THE DISABLED MAN. JESUS DOES THE "*HARDER*" THING TO PROVE HE CAN DO THE "*EASIER*" THING.

JESUS IS TEACHING PEOPLE ABOUT THE MINISTRY AND AUTHORITY OF THE "SON OF MAN". "SON OF MAN" IS A PHRASE USED OFTEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND IT PRIMARILY MEANS "HUMAN BEING" (LIT: *BEN ADAM*, SON OF ADAM. BUT FROM AN IMPORTANT PROPHETIC VISION OF DANIEL, WE FIND A USAGE OF THE TERM "SON OF MAN" IN A UNIQUE WAY:

DANIEL 7:13-14 - "I KEPT LOOKING IN THE NIGHT VISIONS, AND BEHOLD, WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN WAS COMING, AND HE CAME UP TO THE ANCIENT OF DAYS AND WAS PRESENTED BEFORE HIM. 14 "AND TO HIM WAS GIVEN DOMINION, GLORY AND A KINGDOM, THAT ALL THE PEOPLES, NATIONS AND MEN OF EVERY LANGUAGE MIGHT SERVE HIM. HIS DOMINION IS AN EVERLASTING DOMINION WHICH WILL NOT PASS AWAY; AND HIS KINGDOM IS ONE WHICH WILL NOT BE DESTROYED.

DANIEL SEES A VISION OF GOD ("THE ANCIENT OF DAYS") GIVING DOMINION, GLORY AND A KINGDOM TO A FIGURE IDENTIFIED AS "ONE LIKE A SON OF MAN". ALL OF THE NATIONS ARE GOING TO SERVE HIM. THIS BEGAN TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS A MESSIANIC VISION, SHOWING GOD GIVING THE KINGDOM AUTHORITY TO THE MESSIAH. DURING THE TIME OF JESUS' MINISTRY, THE PHRASE HAD DEVELOPED INTO ANOTHER WAY TO REFER TO THE MESSIAH, ROOTED IN THE DANIEL 7 PROPHECY. THE JEWISH PEOPLE WERE WAITING FOR THE ONE WHO GOD HAD CALLED TO SERVE IN THIS ROLE. LOOK AT THIS INTERACTION BETWEEN JESUS AND THE HIGH PRIEST DURING HIS TRIAL:

MARK 14:60-64 - THE HIGH PRIEST STOOD UP AND CAME FORWARD AND QUESTIONED JESUS, SAYING, "DO YOU NOT ANSWER? WHAT IS IT THAT THESE MEN ARE TESTIFYING AGAINST YOU?" 61 BUT HE KEPT SILENT AND DID NOT ANSWER. AGAIN THE HIGH PRIEST WAS QUESTIONING HIM, AND SAYING TO HIM, "ARE YOU THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE BLESSED ONE?" 62 AND JESUS SAID, "I AM; AND YOU SHALL SEE **THE SON OF MAN** SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." 63 TEARING HIS CLOTHES, THE HIGH PRIEST SAID, "WHAT FURTHER NEED DO WE HAVE OF WITNESSES? 64 "YOU HAVE HEARD THE BLASPHEMY; HOW DOES IT SEEM TO YOU?" AND THEY ALL CONDEMNED HIM TO BE DESERVING OF DEATH.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT MOMENT. BECAUSE WE SEE THE BEGINNINGS OF WHAT WILL COLOR JESUS' MINISTRY MOVING FORWARD. INDIVIDUALS HEALED AND MINISTERED TO, CROWDS WOWED, AND CRITICS OFFENDED (V. 3). A WIDENING DIVIDE WILL TAKE PLACE BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND THOSE IN POWER AND THE COMMON FOLK LONGING FOR HOPE AND JUSTICE.

MATTHEW 9:9 - MATTHEW CALLED TO BE A DISCIPLE

AT THIS POINT THE REPUTATION OF JESUS IS CERTAINLY SPREADING IN THE GALILEAN AREA. HE HAS BEEN TEACHING AND HEALING AND MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY HIS MINISTRY. THAT IS THE BACKGROUND FOR THE SOMEWHAT SUDDEN RESPONSE OF MATTHEW TO JESUS' INVITATION

TO "FOLLOW ME." THAT IS TO SAY, THIS ISN'T JUST SOME RANDOM ENCOUNTER BY TWO PERFECT STRANGERS - MATTHEW VERY LIKELY WOULD HAVE KNOWN WITH WHOM HE WAS SPEAKING. THE CHANCE TO FOLLOW THIS AUTHORITATIVE AND POWERFUL RABBI WAS GREATER THAN THE SOMEWHAT CONTROVERSIAL YET POWERFUL POSITION OF TAX COLLECTOR.

ESV STUDY BIBLE ON MATTHEW: "WHEN JESUS CALLED HIM, MATTHEW WAS SITTING IN THE TAX COLLECTOR'S BOOTH (9:9), COLLECTING TAXES FOR HEROD ANTIPAS, AND THIS MAY HAVE BEEN ALONG A COMMERCIAL TRADING ROUTE ABOUT 4 MILES (6.4 KM) FROM CAPERNAUM. HOWEVER, SINCE THE NARRATIVE SURROUNDING MATTHEW'S CALL IS SET IN CAPERNAUM (9:1, 7, 10; CF. 4:13), THE TAX BOOTH MAY HAVE BEEN ON THE SEA OF GALILEE AT CAPERNAUM, SINCE HEROD ALSO TAXED FISHERMEN. AT HIS CALLING IN THE FIRST GOSPEL HE IS REFERRED TO AS "MATTHEW" (9:9), WHILE MARK'S AND LUKE'S GOSPELS DESCRIBE HIM AS "LEVI THE SON OF ALPHEUS" (MARK 2:14) AND "LEVI" (LUKE 5:27). THE REASON FOR THE VARIATION IN NAMES HAS ELICITED MUCH DISCUSSION, BUT MOST SCHOLARS BELIEVE THAT THE TAX COLLECTOR HAD TWO NAMES, MATTHEW LEVI, WHICH HE EITHER POSSESSED FROM BIRTH OR TOOK ON FOLLOWING HIS CONVERSION. HIS OCCUPATION AS A TAX COLLECTOR IMPLIES THAT HE HAD TRAINING IN SCRIBAL TECHNIQUES AND WAS THUS ABLE TO WRITE, WHILE HIS IDENTITY AS A GALILEAN JEWISH CHRISTIAN SUGGESTS HIS ABILITY TO INTERPRET THE WORDS AND ACTIONS OF JESUS IN LIGHT OF OT MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS."

MATTHEW 9:10-13 - DINNER AT MATTHEW'S HOUSE

Q - WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS DINNER PARTY?

LUKE'S GOSPEL TELLS US THAT THIS DINNER OCCURRED AT MATTHEW'S HOUSE AND THAT IT WAS A "BIG RECEPTION". (LUKE 5:27-32). AND SO IT IS LIKELY AT MATTHEW THE TAX COLLECTORS HOUSE THAT WE HAVE OUR NEXT RUN IN WITH THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS. THEY ARE TROUBLED THAT JESUS, A PRESUMED HOLY MAN, WOULD BE EATING WITH TAX COLLECTORS AND "SINNERS". THEIR EXPECTATION OF HOLY PEOPLE, AND ULTIMATELY THE MESSIAH HIMSELF DID NOT FIT WITH JESUS' ACTIONS AND WORDS.

AND THEN HE QUOTES HOSEA 6:6 TO THOSE WHO PRESUMABLY KNEW THE SCRIPTURES BETTER THAN ANYONE, CHALLENGING THEM TO "GO AND LEARN WHAT THIS MEANS..."