

Matthew 9

This chapter is very similar to the last chapter in that it records miracles Jesus has done, especially healings, and it challenges the reader to examine his or her level of commitment to Christ as a disciple. Jesus claims the power, on earth, to forgive sins (9:2) which is at the center of His purpose on earth. The chapter records five miracles, two of which (like the leper in 8:1-4), could have caused Jesus to become unclean according to the Law of Moses, but the holiness of Christ overpowered the illnesses and drove them away.

TRANSLATION - 9:1-8:

1 And after embracing into the boat, He passed over and He came into His own city. **2** And behold, they were bringing to Him a paralytic on a bed, having been thrown. And seeing, Jesus, their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Have courage, child. They are forgiven you, the sins." **3** And behold some of the scribes said among themselves, "This One blasphemes." **4** And seeing, Jesus, their thoughts, He said, "Why do you all think evil in your hearts? **5** For which is easier, to say, "They are forgiven, your sins," or to say, "Get up and walk"? **6** But, in order that you might be convinced that authority He has, the Son of Man, on earth to forgive sins..." At that point He said to the paralytic, "Arise. Take your bed and go to your house." **7** And after arising, he went away to his house. **8** And after seeing, the crowds were afraid and glorified God, the One giving such authority to men.

WORDS:

"Paralytic" (ver. 2) was first seen at 4:24; 8:6. This is the first use (and only use in Matt.) of the word "bed," out of 9 occasions. "Faith" was first seen in 8:10. Here (9:2, 22, 29) are the next three occasions of this strong biblical word. "Have courage" is seen here (9:2, 22) and at 14:27, in Matt. It is also used at Mark 6:50; 10:49; John 16:33; Acts 23:11. "To forgive" was first seen at 3:15 ("to allow" or "to release"). "Sins" was seen at 1:21; 3:6; and here. It, too, is a strong biblical word. It means to "miss expectations." "Scribes" (ver. 3) was first introduced at 2:4. This is the fifth reference in scribes in Matt. "To blaspheme" means to "speak against." It is used 34 times, three in Matt (9:3; 26:65; 27:39).

"Thoughts" (ver. 4) is related to the verb, "to think," used in the same verse. "Thoughts" is used at 9:4; 12:25; Acts 17:29; Heb. 4:12. The verb was used at 1:20 and otherwise only here. "Evil" was used extensively in the Sermon on the Mount, first at 5:11. "Heart" was first used at 5:8. "Easier" is used 7 times in the NT, twice in Matt (here; 19:24). "To walk" was first used at 4:18, out of 95 uses in the NT.

"Authority" (ver. 6) also means "power." It was first seen at 7:29; 8:9. "Son of Man" designates one as a human being (in general), but it likely sets Jesus in the context of Daniel 7:13-14 since He is seeking to establish His kingdom. See on its first use at 8:20. "To fear" or "to be afraid" was first seen at 1:20; 2:22. "To glorify" was seen at 5:16; 6:2.

GRAMMAR:

"To be convinced" (ver. 6) is a verb, meaning "to know," in the perfect tense, which suggests a settled state of knowledge, or conviction.

PARALLELS:

Mark (2:1-12) has a more detailed account of this event. Luke's account is in 5:17-26.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The Law commanded death for one who blasphemed the name of God (Lev. 24:15-16) and clearly, setting oneself on the same level as God (by claiming to forgive sins) was guilty of such blasphemy. The right to forgive sins belongs to God (Isa. 43:25; 44:22).

COMMENTS:

After casting out the demons (8:28-34), Jesus returns to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, to His own city, Capernaum (4:13). The following events do not necessarily have to be understood having taken place immediately in chronological order.

A paralyzed man was brought to Jesus, having been laid down on a bed. Jesus took note of the faith of the friends (and likely the man himself), and said to the paralyzed man, "Have courage." The "child" is a term of respect, as "daughter" is in verse 22. Jesus continued, "Your sins are forgiven." There is no indication, although many think there was and is, that "sins" were the cause of his paralysis. Rather, it is more likely that Jesus simply gets straight to the most important point: getting rid of the barrier between the man and God. Yet, beginning with the forgiveness of sins, rather than the healing, certainly draws the attention of the scribes and gives Jesus an important opportunity to teach a valuable lesson. The only other occasion where Jesus forgave sins on earth is Luke 7:48. He had taught His disciples to pray for forgiveness (Matt. 6:12); here, He offers the forgiveness by His own authority.

The scribes are speaking among themselves, so that the larger audience does not hear, stating that Jesus is speaking against God by assuming the authority to forgive sins. What the scribes were saying was true *if* Jesus were only a man. Jesus knows their words and their thoughts and responds publicly, asking which is easier: salvation from sins or healing a paralyzed man? Ultimately, for Jesus one is just as easy as the other.

Jesus continued, "In order that you may be convinced (know) that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." and then Jesus turns to the paralyzed man. Jesus wanted His audience and His generation to know, as He wants us to know, that He does have the authority and spiritual power to forgive sins. That's why man needs to obey Him for such forgiveness. To prove (cf. John 20:30-31) that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins, He turns to the paralyzed man and commands him to get up, take his bed / pallet, and go home. The man immediately is healed and does exactly what Jesus told him to do.

The crowds reacted with fear, deep awe and respect for Jesus, and then glorified God (see Matt. 5:16) because He had given such authority to men. The crowd, as a whole, has not yet recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Of course, only one man has such authority, but more men will be given the authority to preach the conditions for forgiveness once the Holy Spirit reveals those conditions (Acts 2:38).

APPLICATION:

In addition to the reasons given under "Application" at 8:1-4 for the healing miracles Jesus performed, here we learn another application. Jesus has power to forgive sins and He had that power while He was on earth. Many Protestants argue against the necessity of baptism for the forgiveness of sins (against the clear teaching of such passages as Acts 2:38 and 22:16) because the thief on the cross, presumably, was not baptized. While that assumption is not provable (remember many people were baptized by John!), Jesus points out here that He had, while on earth, the ability to forgive sins. Clearly, the case of the thief on the cross is not parallel to those who live after Christianity was established.

Sin does not cause suffering. Jesus clearly teaches that in John 9:1-3 (see also the book of Job). *Some* sin causes *some* suffering, however since Adam and Eve's sin, Satan has had influence in this world and that influence causes a lot of sickness and a lot of suffering. It's true, sin might be related to suffering (cf. James 5:15).

There are other indications of Jesus' supernatural knowledge: 12:25; 22:18; Luke 6:8; 11:17; John 2:24-25; 6:61, 64. We do not know how much of that knowledge was His by right of His own divine nature or how much was revealed to Him at the time by the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 4:14).

Just like this crowd, we need to marvel at what God has done through Jesus Christ (Acts 10:35; 13:16, 26; Rom. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:11; 7:1; Col. 3:22; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:17; Rev. 11:18; 14:7; 19:5).

TRANSLATION - 9:9-13:

9 And after passing on from there, Jesus saw a man sitting at the tax booth, being called Matthew, and He said to him, "Follow me." And after rising, he followed Him.

10 And it happened, Him reclining at the table in the house, that behold many tax collectors and sinners, after coming, reclined at the table with Jesus and His disciples. **11** And after seeing, the Pharisees, they were saying to His disciples, "Why with the tax collectors and sinners eats your teacher?" **12** And He, after hearing, said, "Not a need they have, those strong of a doctor but those having problems. **13** But, after leaving, learn what this is: 'Mercy I desire and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call righteous but sinners."

WORDS:

"Tax booth" (ver. 9) is found at 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27, all in reference to Matthew. "To follow" was first seen at 4:20, 22, 25 when Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John. "To recline at table" is all one word and is related to the following verb "to recline at the table with" (which has attached to the verb the prefix "with"). "To recline" at the table is found 14 times in the NT, in Matt 5 times (9:10; 22:10-11; 26:7, 20). "To recline with" is found 7 times: (9:10; 14:9; Mark 2:15; 6:22; Luke 7:49; 14:10, 15). "Tax collector" was first seen at 5:46. This is the first use of the word "sinners" in the Bible. It is related to the word "to sin" used in verse 5. This word is used 47 times, 5 in Matt (9:10-11, 13; 11:19; 26:45). "Disciple" was first seen at 5:1; 8:21, 23.

"Need" (ver. 12) is found first at 3:14; 6:8. "To be strong" was first seen at 5:13; 8:28. It means healthy. "Doctor" is used 7 times, only here in Matt: 9:12; Mark 2:17; 5:26; Luke 4:23; 5:31; 8:43; Col. 4:14. "Problems" is used 16 times; it was first seen at 4:24; 8:16. "Learn" (ver. 13) is the verb form of the noun "disciple." The verb is used 25 times, in Matt at 9:13; 11:29; 24:32. This is the first use of the biblical word "mercy." It is used 27 times, in Matt at 9:13; 12:7; 23:23. This is also the first use of the word "sacrifice." It is used 28 times, in Matt at 9:13; 12:7. "Righteous" was first seen at 1:19; 5:45.

PARALLELS:

Again, Mark (2:13-17) parallels this account. Mark identifies Matthew as "Levi, son of Alphaeus." Luke's account is in 5:27-32.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Avoiding sustained relations with sinners was forbidden in the OT (Psa. 1:1; 119:63; Prov. 13:20; 14:7; 28:7). Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 in verse 13, and He quotes that text again in 12:7.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

"Tax booth" (ver. 9) was a small place where tax collectors could collect taxes and duties. See "Archaeology" at 5:46 for more details of tax collection in the Roman Empire. Like countries today, Jews were taxed multiple times. Males above age 20 had to pay an annual temple tax of a day's wage (a half-shekel). Non-Roman citizens had to pay a tax on land (if they owned property) and a denarius (a day's wage). Everyone had to pay taxes on sales, customs, tolls, etc. Matthew's tax booth was likely on the *Via Maris* which passed by Capernaum, going north-south. On "Pharisees," see "Archaeology" at 3:7.

COMMENTS:

Jesus was choosing certain men to be a select group within His broader followers. He has already chosen Peter, Andrew, James, and John (4:18-22). Now He calls a man who had been serving the Roman government as a tax collector. As soon as Jesus called him, Matthew arose and left his stable job to become a follower of Jesus. While we have not seen an interaction between Jesus and Matthew, we presume Matthew had considerable knowledge of Jesus from His ministry in and around Capernaum. As a tax collector employed by the Roman

government, He would have been knowledgeable of Greek as well as Aramaic, a note-taker, and well equipped to write an account of the life of Jesus.

Showing his enthusiasm for his new Master, Matthew hosts a dinner for his fellow tax collectors and those designated “sinners.” We do not know if these “sinners” simply did not fulfill all the rituals of the Law of Moses, or the rituals of the Pharisees, or if they were immoral people, but associated with the tax collectors, they were despised by the common Jew and were social outcasts. Tax collectors were despised, not just because of their dishonesty and extortion but because they came into frequent contact, even working with Gentiles, and handled Roman money which had pagan gods symbolized on it. Some tax collectors were guilty of extortion (Luke 3:12-13; 19:8).

When the Pharisees (who would not have entered the house lest they become unclean) see Jesus eating with these types of people, they critically ask the disciples why Jesus ate with such people. Later, Jesus will be accused of being a “friend of tax collectors and sinners” (11:19). It was almost unheard of for a Jewish rabbi to actively pursue relations with known sinners. As with the scribes in verse 4, Jesus knows what the Pharisees are thinking. He gives a general statement: “Healthy people do not need a doctor. The sick do.” Then He challenges the Pharisees (who were supposed to be teachers of the Law) to go study their “Bible,” their OT. Jesus quotes from Hosea 6:6 wherein God, through the prophet, challenges Israel to respect their fellow man. God had required the sacrifices, so God was not criticizing the sacrifices, but the Israelites believed they could “check off the list” of the sacrifices, not showing love and respect for their fellow man, especially the poor and needy. Jesus accuses the Pharisees of the same spiritual weakness. In portraying Himself as the Great Doctor, Jesus places Himself equal with the Father who identified Himself in Exodus 15:26 as Israel’s “healer.”

Jesus came to call sinners and, of course, everyone is, even if the Pharisees could not recognize that fact. Not all tax collectors were disinterested in spiritual matters (Luke 19:1-10).

APPLICATION:

Jesus was accused of being a drunkard and a glutton because He associated with those sinners, as He called them to the righteousness required by God for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (see 11:19; Luke 7:34). There is none righteous, no not one (Rom. 3:12); therefore, Jesus came to call *all* to repentance. However, all will not respond. Nicodemus was one Pharisee who did respond to become a disciple (John 3:1-15; 7:50-51; 19:39-42).

TRANSLATION - 9:14-17:

14 At that time, there approached Him the disciples of John saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast [much] but your disciples do not fast?” **15** And Jesus said to them, “Are they not able, the sons of the bridal chamber, to mourn for as long as with them is the Bridegroom? But they will come days whenever He will be taken away from them, the Bridegroom, and at that time, they will fast. **16** And no one adds a patch of a piece of new cloth to an old garment; for it will take away its patch from the garment and the tear will be worse. **17** Neither do they put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wineskins will burst and the wine will be spilled and the wineskins will be destroyed. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both will be preserved together.”

WORDS:

On “fasting” (ver. 14), see comments on 6:16-18. “Bridal chamber” (ver. 15) is used at Matt 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34. It can refer to the bridal party. “To mourn” was first used at 5:4. “Bridegroom” is used 16 times, in Matt 6 times, only here and in Matt 25:1, 5-6, 10. “To be taken away” is used 3 times in the NT: 9:15; Mark 2:20; Luke 5:35. “Patch” (ver. 16) is used here; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36. “Piece of cloth” is used twice (9:16; Mark 2:21). “Unshrunk” or “new” is used twice: 9:16; Mark 2:21. Its contrast, “old,” is used 19 times, in Matt at 9:16-17; 13:52. The second word “patch” is different than the first word. This one is used 17 times, only

here in Matt. “Tear” is used only here in Matt, out of 8 uses in the NT. “Wine” (ver. 17) is used here for the first time, out of 34 occasions. In Matt, it is only used again at 27:34. “Wineskins” are used only in this context and in Mark’s (2:22) and Luke’s (5:37-38). “To tear” is used only here. “To be destroyed” was first used at 2:13; 5:29-30; 8:25. “To be preserved with” is all one word, used at 9:17; Mark 6:20; Luke 2:19.

PARALLELS:

See Mark 2:18-22 for his parallel and Luke 5:33-39 for his. John identified Jesus as the bridegroom in John 3:29.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

In the OT, Jehovah is the bridegroom for Israel (Isa. 54:5-6; 62:5; Jer. 3:14; Hosea 2:16-20).

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Weddings would last up to seven days. They were times of joy and celebration, as they are now (see John 2:1-11). “Wineskins” were made from goats, oxen, or camels, tanned and toughened. With time, the skin would become hard and brittle.

COMMENTS:

“Disciples of John” refers to those individuals who were learning from John and following him, until they are directed to change their allegiance to Jesus (9:14; Luke 5:33; 7:18; John 1:35-36; 3:25-26; 4:1; Acts 18:24-26; 19:1-7). They were fasting and the Pharisees were fasting, but the followers of Jesus were not fasting. Why not?

Jesus responded that the “sons of the bridal chamber,” or the “bridal party” in today’s terms would not mourn while the bridegroom was with them. His question in verse 15 expects a negative answer. Clearly, Jesus considers Himself the bridegroom and His people, His followers, eventually His church, is the bride. His immediate followers would have no reason to fast as long as Jesus was with them. But the days would come, and clearly He refers to the death and resurrection (cf. Isa. 53:8; see also Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19) and perhaps the 40 days between His ascension and descent of the Holy Spirit, when His disciples would fast (cf. John 16:16-22; Acts 1:1-3). Now, however, since Jesus is risen, He has promised to be with His disciples forever (Matt. 28:20) so that there will be few times when Christians would feel compelled to fast.

Yet Jesus takes the occasion to teach His followers a lesson relative to His new covenant. One does not sew a new piece of cloth into an old garment. When it is washed, it will shrink, pull away from the old cloth, and make its tear worse. For the same reason, one does not put new wine (which is still fermenting and giving off gases) into old wineskins which have stretched as much as they can; otherwise, the new wine, while fermenting, would cause the old wineskins to stretch beyond their ability, and burst, causing loss of both the wine and the wineskins. New wine goes into new wineskins.

What do these illustrations teach? The disciples were thinking in terms of the old covenant and the old manner of doing things, such as fasting, but Jesus would establish a new covenant, built on new and better promises (see the book of Hebrews). Consequently, one does not force the New Covenant into the Old Covenant forms. There is some continuity between the two, but there are major discontinuities. The New Covenant needs to stand independently.

APPLICATION:

Other NT passages show that Jesus is the Groom and the church is His bride: Matt. 22:2; 25:10-13; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9.

TRANSLATION - 9:18-26:

18 These things, Him saying to them, behold a ruler after coming, bowed to Him saying that, “My daughter just now died. But after coming, lay your hand on her and she will live.” **19** And after arising, Jesus followed Him and His disciples.

20 And behold, a woman hemorrhaging for twelve years, after coming behind, touched the border of His garment; **21** for she said in herself, “If only I may touch His garment, I will be saved.” **22** And Jesus, after turning around and seeing her, said, “Have courage, daughter. Your faith has saved you.” And the woman was saved from that hour.

23 And after coming, Jesus, into the house of the ruler and seeing the flute players and the crowd being disordered, **24** He said, “Go away, for the little girl has not died but sleeps.” And they ridiculed Him. **25** But when the crowd was thrown out, after entering, He grasped her hand, and the little girl arose. **26** And the report of her went out into that whole land.

WORDS:

“Ruler” (ver. 18) is used 37 times, in Matt at 9:18, 23, 34; 12:24; 20:25. “To bow” is the word often used for worship, first seen at 2:2, 8, 11. “Daughter” is used 28 times, here as a term of endearment. It is used in Matt 8 times. “To die” is a word which means “to end” or “to terminate.” It does not necessarily mean “to die.” The verb was used first at 2:19. “To live” was first used at 4:4.

The word “hemorrhaging” (ver. 20) is only used here in the NT. “To touch” was first seen at 8:3, 15. “Border” of a garment is seen at 9:20; 14:36; 23:5; Mark 6:56; Luke 8:44. “To be saved” is a strong biblical word, first seen at 1:21; 8:25. Here, it does not carry its theological, spiritual connotations but means “to be healed.” See above, at ver. 2 on “Have courage.” See at 8:10 on “faith.”

“Flute players” (ver. 23) is found at 9:23; Rev. 18:22. “To be disordered” is found 4 times: 9:23; Mark 5:39; Acts 17:5; 20:10. “To go away” (ver. 24) was first seen at 2:12-14, 22. This verb “to die” is not the same word as that found in verse 18. This is the normal word for dying, found 111 times, first at 8:32. “Little girl” is found 8 times: 9:24-25; 14:11; Mark 5:41-42; 6:22, 28. “To sleep” was first seen at 8:24. “To ridicule” or “to mock” is found at 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53. “To grasp” or “to seize” (ver. 25) is used 47 times, 12 times in Matt. “Report” is used twice: 9:26; Luke 4:14.

GRAMMAR:

The woman’s “if” in verse 21 is a third-class conditional statement. That simply shows that she has some doubt, some hesitancy.

PARALLELS:

Mark records this event in 5:21-43. Luke has it in 8:40-56.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

A woman experiencing her menstrual flow was considered unclean under the Law (Lev. 15:25-30). This woman was unclean for twelve years! If she were married, sexual relations with her husband would have made him unclean (Lev. 18:19). For her to touch Jesus would have made Him unclean. Along with the physical problem, and the social ostracism she likely felt, she was also likely childless and perhaps even sterile. As for the second miracle, to touch a corpse would make Jesus unclean (Num. 19:11-22) or entering the home wherein lay a corpse would render Him unclean (Lev. 21:11; Num. 5:2; 6:6; 9:6-10). There were few resurrections in the OT: 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Border” of the garment (ver. 20) might refer to the tassels worn at the bottom of one’s robe, which reminded (apparently vainly) Jews to obey God’s commands: Num. 15:37-41; Deut. 22:12. The synagogue ruler was a community leader. He may have also been the president of the synagogue (one of three leaders), who was in charge of the order and progress

of worship in the synagogue. While he may have been elected, some served in the office, in the same family, for generations. There are a few resurrections in the OT: 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37.

COMMENTS:

As soon as Jesus had finished that event from the previous paragraph (and this passage sounds like it is closely chronological), a synagogue ruler (Mark gives his name: Jairus; 5:22) came to Him and bowed out of deep respect and hope. His daughter (Mark tells us she is twelve, 5:42), he is convinced, has died, but He trusts that Jesus can lay His hand on her and she will come back to life. Immediately, Jesus arose, with His disciples, and followed the ruler.

But on the way, a woman came into the crowd of followers who had a serious illness. We do not know what illness this was, perhaps it was menorrhagia, hemophilia, or some other disease. For some reason, she had been bleeding for a dozen years. She had enough confidence in the person of Jesus that she believed if she touched simply the border of His garment, she would be healed. When she touched the border, she was made whole. Jesus blessed her confidence in Him and heals her of this dreaded disease which had afflicted her for twelve years. "Daughter" as a direct address is not used elsewhere in the NT. The verb "to save" refers to her physical illness but, perhaps, it refers to her sins as well.

When Jesus arrived, delayed, at the ruler's house, He sees the professional mourners present, with the typical flute players, and the crowd making the typical mourning rituals. Jesus told them to leave because the little girl was not dead but only sleeping. In this sense, Jesus uses "sleeping" as a metaphor for death (Acts 13:36; 1 Thess. 4:14; 5:10; Eph. 5:14), since everyone will, one day, arise from death (John 5:28-29). The crowd, knowing that the girl was dead, mocked Jesus, ridiculing Him; however with the parents' permission, the crowd was thrown out and Jesus entered the home and room where the girl was, grabbed her hand and raised her from the dead. This is the first resurrection from the dead Jesus has performed according to Matthew's account. The report of her resurrection spread throughout that region, as we would expect.

APPLICATION:

Jesus will raise others from the dead (Luke 7:11-17; John 11; Matt. 11:5) to prove to us that He can and will raise us from the dead (1 Cor. 15). The apostles would be given power to raise the dead as well (10:8; Acts 9:36-42; 20:9-12). Many people touched Jesus and were thereby healed (Mark 6:56). Paul will also heal through unusual means (Acts 19:11-12).

TRANSLATION - 9:27-31:

27 And after going away from there, there followed Jesus two blind men, crying out and saying, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" **28** And after entering into the house, there came to Him the blind men, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able this to do?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." **29** At that time, He touched their eyes saying, "According to your faith, let be happen to you." **30** And their eyes were opened. And Jesus warned them strongly saying, "Beware; let no one know." **31** And those after going out, reported it in that whole land.

WORDS:

"Blind" (ver. 27) is found 50 times, 17 in Matt. "To cry out" is used 55 times, first at 8:29. "To have mercy" was first seen at 5:7 in the Beatitudes. "David" was first mentioned at 1:1, 6, 17, 20. He is mentioned in the NT 59 times, in Matt 17 times, and "Son of David" is used 16 times in the NT, 10 in Matt. These blind men are the first to acknowledge Jesus as the descendent of the great king. "To believe" (ver. 28) is used 241 times, first at 8:13. On "faith" (ver. 29), see 8:10. This is now the third time the word is used in this chapter (9:2, 22, 29). "To warn strongly" (ver. 30) is used 5 times: 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5; John 11:33, 38. It is an intense

word. The verb “to report” is related to the noun “report” in verse 26, which is its root word. The verb is found 3 times: 9:31; 28:15; Mark 1:45.

PARALLELS:

Matthew, himself, has a parallel story in 20:29-34. Some scholars want to say they are the same event but there are enough differences in the details to understand they are two separate events.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

There were not healings of blind men in the OT (John 9:32). A similar event happened in 2 Kings 6:17. However, Isaiah associated opening the eyes of the blind with the coming Messiah (35:5; see also 29:18; 42:7). God could give sight to the blind (Exo. 4:11; Psa. 146:8). God made the promise to David (2 Sam. 7:12-14) that David would always have a son sitting on his throne. That promise was sustained throughout Israel’s darkest years (Psa. 89:35-36). The Messiah, then, was considered to be a descendant, *the* descendant, of David (Isa. 11:1). This familial relationship will cause trouble later (Matt. 12:3; 21:9, 15; 22:42-43, 45).

COMMENTS:

Among the specific illnesses Jesus healed, the blind are the most frequently mentioned. These two men believed Jesus was the Son of David, a Messianic term, and they believed He had the power to heal their blindness. Apparently they persisted some time because Matthew tells us that Jesus entered the house (in Capernaum) and the blind men followed Him there. At that point, Jesus asks if they trust Him to heal them. They responded affirmatively.

As He has frequently done so far in Matthew (8:3, 15; 9:25), Jesus touched the blind men; He touched their eyes. Immediately, their eyes were opened. We do not know exactly why Jesus warned them strongly not to tell anyone (cf. 8:4) - clearly He was working on His Father’s time schedule - but they could not keep such a miracle a secret. They reported it throughout that whole area.

APPLICATION:

After the Gospels, there are no other examples of healing blind people. While the Pharisees see physically but are spiritually blind (see verse 34), these two men are physically blind but have heard enough reports that they trust Jesus has the power to heal them. He heals them as a reward for their faith and so proves Himself to be the “Son of David,” the Messiah. These blind men acknowledge the Messianic role of Jesus before even Peter does in 16:16. Just as the blind men persisted in desiring healing, Jesus teaches us to be persistent in our prayers (Luke 18:1; Col. 4:2).

TRANSLATION - 9:32-34:

32 And these going away, behold they brought to Him a man, mute, demon-possessed.

33 And after the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the crowd marveled, saying, “Never has such appeared in Israel.”

34 But the Pharisees were saying, “By the ruler of the demons, He casts out demons.”

WORDS:

“Mute” (ver. 32) is used 14 times, 7 times in Matt. See 4:24 for “demon-possessed.” See 8:10 for the verb “to marvel.” See 1:20 for “to appear.” See 7:22 for “demons.”

PARALLELS:

There is a parallel account in Luke 11:14-15.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Again, Isaiah 35:5-6 anticipates the Messiah opening the mouths of the mutes.

COMMENTS:

No sooner had the blind men left until friends brought a mute man to Jesus. Normally Matthew distinguishes between demon possession and physical illnesses, but here the demon possession was causing the man to be mute (for a few other exceptions, see 12:22; 15:22, 28; 17:14-18). Jesus cast out the demon and the mute began speaking. The crowds marveled and realized that such things had never before been seen in Israel. On the other side of the reaction, the Pharisees begin saying that Jesus cast out spirits by the ruler of demons, Satan himself. This accusation will be strongly met by Jesus in 12:25-32.

APPLICATION:

In the NT, sinners are never said to be possessed by demons. Those possessed by demons are not said to engage in outright sinful behavior (other than physical abuse). Rather, demon-possessed individuals are generally classified with the physically sick.

TRANSLATION - 9:35-38:

35 And Jesus was going around all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease.

36 And seeing the crowds, He had compassion concerning them, because they were wearied and dejected just as sheep not having a shepherd. **37** At that time, He said to His disciples, "The harvest [is] great, but the workers [are] few. **38** Therefore, request the Lord of the harvest thus He may send out workers into His harvest."

WORDS:

For the words used in verse 35, see its parallel at 4:23. "To have compassion" (ver. 36) is used 12 times, in Matt at 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34. "To be wearied" is used four times: Matt. 9:36; Mark 5:35; Luke 7:6; 8:49. "To be dejected" is used 7 times, three in Matt (9:36; 15:30; 27:5). "Sheep" is found 39 times, 11 in Matt. "Shepherd" is found 18 times, 3 in Matt (9:36; 25:32; 26:31). "Harvest" (ver. 38) is used 13 times, 6 times in Matt (9:37-38; 13:30, 39). "To request" or "to pray" is used 22 times, only here in Matt.

GRAMMAR:

"To be weary" (ver. 36) and "to be dejected" are verbs in the perfect tense, which suggest a settled state of exhaustion.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

First, the OT spoke frequently of Israel as a flock whose shepherds (leaders) were hirelings: Ezekiel 34; Num. 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chron. 18:16; Zech. 10:2-3.

Secondly, we have already seen Micah 5:2-4 predict the coming of One who would shepherd God's people. We were told in Matt 2:6 that Jesus is that Shepherd.

Harvest imagery was also prominent in the OT: Isa. 24:13; 27:12; Hosea 6:11; Joel 3:13.

COMMENTS:

Verse 35 repeats the thoughts and actions from 4:23, suggesting that chapters 5-7 illustrate the "teaching" and "preaching," while chapters 8-9 illustrate the "healing" Jesus did. We know that all of the teaching and miracles He did were repeated every where He went; these are only a sample. Count the number of times Matthew uses "all" or "every" (they are the same word in Greek) in this paragraph. Jesus' ministry was comprehensive.

Yet seeing the crowds, He felt compassion on their souls (see also 14:14; 15:32; 20:34) because, like Israel of old, they were wearied and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. As with Israel of old, Jesus' Israel did not have religious leaders who cared for them as they should have. They were wearied and dejected because of that condition, as well as their own

sins. They needed a leader; they needed a Shepherd. "Shepherd" is one of the oldest designations for Jehovah God (Gen. 48:15; 49:24). For Jesus to identify Himself as Israel's Shepherd (as He does extensively in John 10) shows that He set Himself equal with Jehovah God, that is, Divine. Everyone needs someone who cares about them. Jesus told His followers that the harvest was great and it was ready, but there were far too few workers. So Jesus challenged His followers to entreat, request, pray that the Lord of the harvest, who desired His harvest, would send out workers into the harvest. With that prayer on His lips, Jesus will choose twelve men in chapter 10 and He will send them out to do exactly what He has been doing.

APPLICATION:

Matthew has already made reference to a harvest in 3:12; 13:30, 39. Jesus called His disciples to "fish for men" (4:19). In the next chapter, He will send them out with that mission. Jesus also called His disciples to consider the fields white and ready for harvest in John 4:35. In the next chapter, Jesus will appoint twelve men to be His apostles and will send them to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:6). Jesus will send out even more (72 men) in Luke 10:1-12. The church is now the flock of God with Jesus being the Chief Shepherd (John 10; Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4). Christians today are workers in God's harvest (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Cor. 3:9).