

## HEALINGS DONE BY JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Matthew does not impress me with his healing tales about Jesus. They give no satisfactory evidence of Jesus being God's prophet or whatever.

The mind has tremendous power when it comes to healing illnesses which it itself has caused or made the person falsely think he or she is suffering from. Many people only imagine they are ill. Every healer who lays hands on the sick a lot is bound to get what appeared to be some incredible results. Jesus might have just worked with hypochondriacs or cranks who imagined their health problems. He could have chosen his sick people carefully to avoid dealing with those he could not cure. The gospel says he did not offer his services to everybody (Matthew 13:58). The New Testament may be concentrating on the more dramatic healings and ignoring the others.

Jesus allegedly healed "all the sick" of Galilee and Syria (Matthew 4:23, 24) and all the sick who were brought to him at Gennesaret (Matthew 14:35, 36).

The all is all the sick who were brought to him for obviously all sick people on the verge of death could not be brought. This makes it less forceful and impressive. His followers would have had some say in who approached the Lord.

At Gennesaret, it was only those who touched the cloak of Jesus got better not all the afflicted so Jesus chose the people he wanted to work on carefully. Anybody that wasn't cured would be embarrassed to say so for Jesus blamed his failures on the lack of faith and goodness of the person wanting healing. The sick deserve no compassion if their lack of faith is their own fault and faith is the only way to get better.

The book does not claim that the cures happened in the twinkling of an eye. It does not say that the healings were complete that all their problems were healed, and permanent. For many, the healing may have been just a healing of the mind or the heart. A good psychologist can cure something, some nasty kink or symptom in everybody at least for a while.

When Matthew says that Jesus cured all who were afflicted he has those who were bothered by evil spirits in mind (8:16). He just says that Jesus made people feel better and feel cured which is naturally possible.

A demon could mean a subconscious artificial personality that harms so Jesus exorcisms could be nothing more than psychiatric work. A person could be said to be possessed by a demon simply because it succumbs to its charms rather than in the sense of being taken over by one. Or a person could be said to be possessed by demons if that person is sick, the demons being regarded as the cause of the illness. There is no reason at all to believe that Jesus regarded his exorcisms as provably and clearly supernatural or that they were. I mean he could have taught they were supernatural but not provably so. This is more important than trying to show that Jesus did not consider the demons to be miracle beings because if they did not look supernatural then there is no need to believe that they were supernatural.

It is not said that when Jesus cured the "possessed" man and dispatched the demons into swine which drowned themselves after that that the swine did this there and there for if when they did it a miracle was the only explanation (8).

Jesus did not say he had the kind of casting out of demons that we read of in horror novels in mind in 12. Perhaps he just means the casting out of demons that were merely a source of temptation. 12 does not prove that he was sure that the unclean spirits he put out of people who were crazy were thought by him to be real personal entities and not mental forces.

In Matthew 8, Jesus cures a leper. The story says the leprosy vanished immediately and Jesus told him to go and show himself to a priest. Notice that Matthew does not actually say that the appearance of the disease disappeared or when it will. Matthew feels that the disease was instantly cured but nobody can be sure of that. It might have been supposed that it can take time for the signs of the disease to go after the disease has been taken away. How did the healed know they were better? They didn't. Jesus made them feel as if they did. When he cured paralytics they might have managed a few struggling steps. They would have believed they were cured and the struggle was about just their need to relearn how to walk. Jesus blamed sin for relapses – the perfect way out should the cured be soon see not to have been cured at all. We read in Matthew 12 that our Lord taught that when a demon leaves a man it searches for a new home and if it can't find one it comes back to the man so he was blaming demons and perhaps sin as well for failed or temporary or imaginary "cures".

It is not said that Jesus instantly cured the centurion's servant (8) or that he got better at all. Jesus told him to return home and the servant would be better but if he wasn't people would say the promise was conditional on the centurion keeping the faith. We have no reason to believe that Matthew viewed Jesus, who promised that the servant would recover, as infallible.

Matthew knew that there may have been a natural reason for why Peter's mother recovered from an alleged fever when Jesus took her by the hand. Perhaps that gave her the strength to recover fast and perhaps she was already a lot better than she thought she was.

Matthew does not ask us to believe that the paralytic was cured by supernatural power (9).

Matthew never wrote that the daughter of Jairus was raised from the dead by Jesus (9:24). Didn't Jesus say she was only asleep? The bleeding woman whose bleeding stopped when she touched Jesus' clothes was told by him that her faith had made her well (9). Now, God will miraculously heal nobody because they have trusted but because he wants to show that he exists. Jesus taught this by implication (Matthew 7:21-23) so Jesus was telling her she only got better because a strong positive attitude works wonders. He did not believe that it was a miracle. We see this especially from the fact that nothing is said about the cure being permanent. Anybody could cure and make a person feel better when in fact the person is not cured but only feels he is and soon relapses into bad health which lack of faith or some sin or another illness would be blamed for. The fact that the synoptics record this alleged miracle shows they were desperate for miracles and nothing great had been done by Jesus. For instance, he never raised Lazarus from the dead for they would have focused on that one instead.

Matthew does not tell us that the blind men were instantly healed (9). He does not say that this or the cure of the mute was miraculous.

The man with the bad hand might have only believed that it was useless (12) and Jesus cured this belief and so cured him. The blind men (20) may have been cured of hysterical blindness by Jesus. Matthew doesn't dogmatise about it being a miracle.