

The Old Paths

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“...Were Made Perfectly Whole”

Jarrold Jacobs

In light of our reading from last week, we turn our attention to Matthew 14:34-36. After feeding 5000 “men, beside women and children” (v. 13-21) and His walking “on the sea” in Galilee/Tiberias (v. 22-33), the people followed Christ to Genesaret, and brought their sick to Him that He might heal them. (v. 35). Matthew records, “*And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole*” (Matt. 14:36). The words, “*perfectly whole*” mean, “*completely healed*” (A.T. Robertson, Vol. 1, p. 120). J.H. Thayer defines this phrase as, “*to preserve through danger, to bring safe through; to save, i.e., cure one who is sick*” (p. 142).

On this occasion, these people, like the woman from Matthew 9:20-22, just touched Christ’s garment, and in so doing, they were made “*perfectly whole.*” They were completely cured from their diseases at the moment they touched “*the hem of his garment.*” Why emphasize this point? It is because the miracles of Christ had a deeper meaning than what we sometimes give them. Unfortunately, we live in a time when people have largely dismissed the miracles of Christ, stating that they were not actually miracles, but were merely “perceived” as miracles. Still, others claim that Christ’s purpose for coming to this earth was simply to perform miracles, alleviating people’s pain.

Both views are wrong.

What Was The Purpose Of Christ’s Miracles?

The miracles performed by Christ served two purposes. The first purpose was to cause men to believe that He was (is) the Son of God. The intent was to cause people to believe that Messiah had come to them when they saw the miracles performed (Jn. 2:11, 23, 4:53, etc.). Furthermore, miracles were performed for the purpose of showing people that Christ had power to forgive sins (Matt. 9:2-6; Mk. 2:9-11; Lk. 5:22-24). Perhaps this aspect of Christ’s work is not emphasized enough, but His power over physical infirmities was witnessed by men, and was done as proof positive to show that He had power over their spiritual infirmities! This is the reason Christ came to this earth in the first place — to forgive men of their sins (Lk. 19:10; Jn. 18:37; I Tim. 1:15).

Miracles And Forgiveness

In light of what we have learned, when we consider instances of miraculous healing, such as is described in Matthew 14:34-36; how could Christ have done anything less than made men and women “perfectly whole” from their illnesses? To do less would have left them still battling their various diseases (palsy, bleeding, fever, etc.). In some cases, it would have left a dead person still dead (Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, etc.). When Christ healed, or raised someone from the dead, this was a miracle that accomplished its work com-

pletely.

In like manner, when Christ forgives sin in the lives of men and women, He does not forgive in a “partial” way, but forgives men completely of their sin. When one obeys the Lord’s plan for salvation, having faith in Him, repenting of his sins, confessing Christ, and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:36-38, 8:35-39, 16:30-34, etc.), then this person has been completely forgiven of his past, or alien sins. If this did not happen, then this person is still blemished with the stain of sin, and stands outside of a relationship with Christ. If not, why not?

Regardless of how “bad” or sinful one might have been in his/her life, Christ has the ability to forgive, and forgive completely, those sins of which one has been guilty. This was true on the day of Pentecost, when those guilty of murdering, not just anyone, but the Son of God (Acts 2:36), were offered a way by which they could receive forgiveness (Acts 2:38). About 3000 accepted those terms that day and were forgiven (Acts 2:41, 47). A little later in history, it was Saul (Paul) who heard the Lord, repented of his sins, and had his sins washed away (Acts 9:4, 6, 9, 22:16). Later Paul would speak of all his evil-doing, stating, “*Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*” (II Tim. 1:13-16). He could say this because Christ completely saved him from his sins. What about you? Are you saved? (Acts 2:38)

Answering Questions From Our Bible Reading

Jarrold Jacobs

In January, this church started a system for reading the Bible through this year. I hope all are doing well and sticking with the schedule! As happens from time to time, people have questions concerning what they are reading (See: Acts 8:30-34). In the interest of helping others understand what they are reading, I have included (with the querist's permission) three questions I received a couple of weeks ago concerning our reading in Genesis 33 and Matthew 11. Perhaps these are questions you had as well. I hope this helps us all as we read our Bibles this year.

Question From The Reading:

Was Jacob literally offering Esau his wife and children as atonement or what? Or was it just a symbol? And, why did Jacob just pull up and move away with Esau. I know he didn't follow WITH Esau, but came later because of the children and young livestock. But why would he do that? Was it so the two brothers could live near each other as family did? I suppose I am looking at them as people of today and not really seeing them as the nomadic people they were. Is that correct?

Also, in Mathew 11 when it speaks of the violence in heaven, what is that referring to? My study notes indicate that it could have been the opposition of unbelievers at that time or something else (I can't remember). What do you think it is?

My Answer:

To deal with the first part of your question, you said: "Was Jacob literally offering Esau his

wife and children as atonement or what?" I don't know where you saw that. Could it be something said around verse 5? If so, I understand that if anything, this is just Jacob calling himself the servant to Esau, but not that he was offering his children/wives to him. Remember, the only thing Jacob knows is that 20 years ago, Esau said he was going to kill Jacob (27:41-42). Now, word comes that Esau and 400 men are coming to see him (32:6). He is scared because he is certain that Esau and his "army" have come to kill him just like he had promised. So, he split the group in two in the hopes that if one group were attacked, the other could escape from Esau (32:8), and then he sends the groups of animals to Esau (32:13-19). Now, in chapter 33, Jacob insists on Esau keeping those animals (8-11), but I didn't see a place where he said anything about his family other than to introduce them, and say that all of them belonged to "thy servant," i.e., Jacob (v. 5).

To the other part about Jacob moving with Esau, I don't know if that was a permanent thing, but rather, he had to pass through Edom (Esau's country) to get where he was going (32:3). Therefore, in 20 years, it seems that Esau's anger has been calmed, and now he offers to "escort" them (33:12) through the land. Obviously, there are no hard feelings, and Esau is allowing Jacob to pass through the land. Yet, Jacob cannot

follow because he has children, animals, etc., (v. 13), but promises to meet Esau in Seir (the capital, v. 14). I don't know as Jacob moved there to live, but just promised he'd meet up with Esau in Seir. Based on verses 17-20, he obviously kept moving, and ended up in Padanaram.

Concerning Matthew 11:12, I have it paralleled with Luke 16:16. Perhaps Luke's writing, on this occasion, helps the passage to be easier understood. The idea of "violence" here or "suffering violence" is not to be taken literally in accordance with 21st century understanding. We all know one cannot take anything away from God. Rather, it is the idea of people attempting to "force" or "crowd" into this kingdom from the time John started preaching up to that present moment that Christ was speaking. Remember, these people were looking for an earthly kingdom and an earthly deliverer. So, when they saw John, they thought he was the One to Come, and he denied it (Matt. 3). Later, they would attempt to take Christ and make Him a king (Jn. 6:15), He got away from them. Therefore, this "violence" of Matthew 11 just has to do with men trying to "press," and "crowd" into a kingdom they thought was earthly in nature. Yet, continuing in the reading, you read of Jesus' rebuke of the people for not understanding Who it was that was speaking to them, and their denying the evidence of His being the Messiah (v. 15-27).

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