

**The Gospel of Matthew**  
**Week Ten**  
**Matthew 9:9-9:38**

**Day One**

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

v. 9 – We have a short autobiographical story from Matthew in these few verses. Matthew was obviously a humble man and referred to himself in the third person. The early church leaders were not perfect men, but they certainly knew the story wasn't about them; it was about Jesus. Would that all of us involved in the Lord's work would keep that in mind.

While this seems like the first encounter between Jesus and Matthew, it need not have been. Matthew could have heard Jesus minister or even had a conversation with Him at some point. It is attractive to think that this encounter was dramatic, with Matthew responding to a random and unexpected call to follow Jesus, and it could have happened like that. Then again, it could have been a follow-up to a previous meeting or encounter.

v. 10 – It is of note that Matthew began doing what Jesus was doing, and that was to interact with sinners. We don't have any report that Jesus *ordered* Matthew to host this dinner; Jesus rather influenced His new disciple through His example. Jesus spent a lot of time around "sinners." That is what He expected His disciples to do then and now. **How many sinners do you know and "hang around"? What's more, who is criticizing you for the company you keep?**

v. 11 – The leaders of Israel were certainly upset with Jesus that He spent so much social time with "sinners." They did not question Jesus, but rather His followers to try and explain Jesus' behavior. Tax collectors were hated, because they were seen to be collaborators with the Roman oppressors. They made their money by collecting as much above their assigned tax quotas as possible. The upper limit of their income was huge and no one really knew how much more they were collecting above their quota, so they were always under suspicion of being crooks. It is interesting that they were included in the same category as prostitutes and drunkards.

v. 12 – Jesus acknowledged that the people at Matthew's dinner were spiritually "sick." They had all kinds of moral problems, as did the Pharisees. The problem was that the Pharisees could not see that they had a problem; the "sinners" did and welcomed the

chance to be with the Great Physician. The Church often feels the same way the Pharisees did and is eager not to have too many sinners around, unless those sinners are willing to clean up their act. **What is your attitude toward “sinners”? What can you do to be more like Jesus in this regard?**

v. 13 – Jesus told His critics to go away and reflect on what it meant that God desired mercy rather than sacrifice, referring to Micah 6:6. **Who needs mercy?** It's the scoundrels and rascals of society. **From whom do we often want to withhold mercy?** It's from the scoundrels and rascals, unless they promise to clean up their act or until after they have cleaned it up. **To whom can you show mercy today? By the way, what does it mean that God prefers mercy rather than sacrifice? Which do you prefer?** The religious mind of man prefers the latter, for it provides a predictable system by which man can be sure he is pleasing God.

## Day Two

14 Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 15 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. 16 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse 17 Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

v. 14 – I admire how accessible Jesus was. He responded to the Pharisees' criticism yesterday. Today we see how He fielded questions from John's disciples. John's men could not understand why Jesus' disciples didn't have a fasting regimen like the other religious men in Israel. Jesus seemed only too glad to provide a reply.

vs. 15&16 – Jesus indicated that something new and different was present in His ministry that was missing from that of the Pharisees of even John's followers. Jesus' disciples would eventually fast, He assured them, but they would fast with new motivation, not from legalism or religious Law requirement but from a heart connected to the love of God the Father. People would fast not to *gain* favor with God, but because they already *have* favor with God. They would fast to fulfill a “righteous fast” as was written in Isaiah:

Why have we fasted,' they say,' and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke,

to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I (Isaiah 58:3-9).

**When is the last time you fasted? Why not schedule some days to fast now?**

v. 17 – Jesus indicated that the “wineskin” of Judaism was flawed. Jesus did not come to introduce the new in the context of the old but to create a whole new context, which in this case was a mindset or understanding, that would be capable of containing the new attitudes and heart conditions that Jesus required. That new mindset would lead to the formation of the Church, which was the new wineskin to contain the new understanding from God.

This principle holds true in much of life. You cannot take something new and fit it into a system, business or ministry that was created with the old. If the new is to have a place to “reside” and thrive, there must be new structures, ideas and attitudes. **Where are you trying to store new wine in old wineskins? Have any of your new patches torn holes in the old garment? Where are you frustrated? Is the answer to redouble your efforts to make the new work, or to find a new home for the new idea, movement or product that is more receptive and open?**

**Day Three**

18 While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, "My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live." 19 Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples. 20 Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. 21 She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed."

v. 18 – Once again we see how accessible Jesus was to those with questions or needs. **Are you accessible? To whom? How often? How can you be more accessible?** If Jesus were alive today, maybe He would be accessible by answering the emails He received. The ruler of the synagogue came and humbled himself before Jesus and made an outrageous request. His daughter wasn't just sick; she had died. The father was asking Jesus to come and raise her from the dead! This was more than a disease; this was death. **Could Jesus do that? What would He say or do with this request?**

The man had great faith and knew that, if Jesus could or would only touch her, she would live again. **Where is your faith? What do you believe that Jesus could do if only He would touch that life or situation? What are you doing to get Him to that point where He can heal you or someone else?**

vs. 19&20 – The father must have been encouraged that Jesus was willing to come. That indicated that Jesus wasn't afraid of the request. He was going with the express purpose of bringing the girl back to life! The man's faith was being rewarded, but not without first being tested. First, there was the test of delay. Jesus had to press through a crowd to make any progress toward the man's home. I am sure the man wanted them to run, but they could only slowly make their way.

Then Jesus encountered another person with a need. A woman had faith just like the father did that a touch from Jesus, whether an active touch of His hand or a passive touch of His garment, had the power to heal. So this woman pressed through the crowd (we know there was a crowd from Mark's gospel; see Mark 5:25-34).

v. 21 – Notice how the woman "talked" to herself. She had faith and said something about it, if only to herself. This is consistent with what Paul wrote:

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence (2 Corinthians 4:13-14).

**What are you saying to yourself where faith is concerned? Are you being optimistic or pessimistic?** Notice the woman did not say, "I may get healed." She said, "I *will* be healed." There is a big difference between the two statements. **Are you tentative where faith is concerned? What is your faith talk like? What do you say to yourself? To others?**

This woman brought a 12-year-old physical ailment to Jesus, confident He could do something about it. **Do have any longstanding problems that you believe are immune from God's healing touch?** If you do, then think again!

#### Day Four

22 Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment. 23 When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, 24 he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him. 25 After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. 26 News of this spread through all that region.

v. 22 – Jesus saw the woman with her faith and knew that she had touched Him to have a need met. He told her to take heart for her *faith* had healed her. Jesus didn't say that He had healed her. It was her faith. Her 12-year-long problem vanished instantly, not gradually. God is never too busy to attend to your need, and He is never diminished in the essence of His goodness. (Being good to you doesn't preclude God being good to me, too. There is plenty of Him to go around!)

**Does it disturb you that Jesus didn't say, "I have healed you," but rather, "Your faith has healed you"? Does this mean that anyone with faith can be healed? Will be healed? Does this mean that anyone who is not healed does not have faith?**

If I were the father, I would have been anxious to have Jesus get to my house. I would have thought something like this: "This situation with the woman could have waited. She had her problem 12 years, but my daughter is dead! We can come back to the woman later." This is why I say that God ultimately rewarded his faith, but not before it was tested with the answer being delayed. An even greater test was ahead of the man. Let's look at that now.

v. 23 – When Jesus finally arrived at the man's home, the mourners had already gathered to wail for his departed daughter. Now the man's faith was on public display. What he had done as an individual was transformed into a community event. If his faith was to fail, it was going to fail publicly.

v. 24 – Jesus didn't win many people over when he said that the girl was simply sleeping. They laughed at Him. **I wonder what more I could do for God if I wasn't afraid of people when they laughed at me? I wonder how many opportunities I've missed because I allowed laughing people to intimidate me?**

It occurs to me, however, that both parties were correct. From the perspective of the Jews, the girl was dead. They were correct, although their perspective was incomplete. Jesus perspective was complete that the girl was only asleep, for He was about to raise her from the dead. The crowd went wrong when they laughed at Jesus. I am not wrong when I share my perspective; I am wrong when I refuse to acknowledge that I may not have the whole or correct perspective. That is why I need to learn to listen to others and not dismiss what they say, as the Jews did here to Jesus. When you laugh at someone, you do so because you believe you are correct and they are absurdly wrong. **Who are you laughing at now, not realizing that your insight or perspective may be correct but incomplete?**

vs. 25&26 -- Jesus ignored their laughter and raised the girl from the dead. The father's faith was rewarded. The father never "sided" with those who laughed; he put his trust in Jesus. **What about you? Do you have any faith blind spots? (You won't know the answer unless you ask God and truly want to know.) What could you do if you weren't afraid of people laughing at you? Where do you feel like you have an incomplete perspective and need God's insight into some problem or dilemma?**

### Day Five

27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" 28 When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. 29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; 30

and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." 31 But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

v. 27 – Matthew gave us a wonderful account of the diverse people with problems whom Jesus touched and healed. As Jesus moved on from the encounter with the woman and the dead girl, two blind men crying out for help followed Him. These men probably needed assistance, since they could not see where they were going, and we don't know how long they had to walk or cry out. Jesus heard them, but was in no hurry to heal them. **Who can know the mind of God and why He does what He does?**

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, **so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.** As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:6-11 emphasis added).

v. 28 – When Jesus stopped traveling and presumably went into His house, He asked the men a strange question. He asked them if they believed He could heal them. They would not have pursued Jesus if they had thought otherwise, yet Jesus asked them both to respond. He wanted them to declare what they wanted and to focus their faith. They could have said, "We want to learn how to deal with our blindness," indicating then that they did not have faith for healing. **So what obvious question is God asking you right now? What do you want Him to do for you? Do you believe He can do it?**

v. 29 – The men did believe that Jesus could heal them, so Jesus touched their eyes and declared that they would be healed *according to their faith*. He left the results up to their individual faith. They could have said they had faith and in reality had none, and consequently would have been left blind.

v. 30 – The men did indeed have faith, for they were instantly healed! I cannot imagine what it must have been like to be blind and then be able to see. What joy those men must have felt! How dramatically their faith had changed their lives!

Then Jesus warned them not to tell anyone. This seems a bit strange. **If you were blind and then could see, wouldn't you want to tell anyone and everyone? Why would Jesus not want them to tell anyone else?** I really have no clue to the answer. Jesus had been healing and great crowds had been attending His gatherings. Even when He traveled, the crowds pressed Him to have their needs met. Jesus had probably already healed other blind men, so this miracle wasn't unique.

**Jesus was stirring up opposition, as we shall see in tomorrow's study, but is that why He told them to keep their healing secret? Was He trying to minimize the opposition that would eventually take His life? We will never know.**

### Day Six

32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. 33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." 34 But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

v. 32 – No Jew reading Matthew's account could possibly deny Jesus' divinity. There was no one who had ever done what Jesus did, and done so much of it. He healed every kind of infirmity with which He was confronted. He often knew the sources of the people's problems; in this case it was a man mute due to demonic presence. Only someone with divine perspective could know that. Jesus raised the dead, healed blind men whether they came alone or in pairs, and had healing power flow from Him, as evidenced by the woman with the issue of blood.

Matthew wasn't just providing a picture that Jesus was a good man. Matthew was making a case that Jesus was (and is) God! There was no doubt in Matthew's mind that these great works could be performed not by a good man or a prophet. These things were all evidence that Jesus was the Son of God!

These powerful deeds set Jesus apart from every other notable religious leader. Mohammed, Buddha, the Dalai Lama, and the millions of Hindu gods never, ever did anything close to the deeds that Jesus did. Jesus isn't just one of the great religious leaders; He is the greatest, because He is God! Therefore, Jesus cannot just be one way to God, for He is infinitely superior to the any other ways. Not only was Jesus a superior teacher to any of His "rivals," He was also performed superior acts of mercy and power.

v. 33 – Jesus not only recognized that the man was mute because of a demon, but He also cast out the demon! Jesus had insight and power, which He shares with His followers to this day through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus' excellence wasn't just manifest 2,000 years ago, it is still made evident through the Church and His followers (or it should be evident, but isn't always). This was to provide a testimony to the fact that Jesus is Lord and is seated at the Father's right hand today. Spiritual gifts are given to men so that all mankind may know that Jesus, the Way to God, is still the only Way to the Father.

**But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.** This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe) (Ephesians 4:7-10 emphasis added).

v. 34 – The crowd was amazed and declared that nothing that Jesus did had ever been seen in the history of Israel. They were correct in their assessment. Yet their leaders were unconvinced and came to the conclusion that Jesus healed the mute man by using the power of the devil against the devil himself. The people had a better understanding than their leaders.

As I have stated before, being a spiritual leader does not guarantee that one is more spiritual or insightful than anyone else. It just means that God has chosen that person to lead. When that leader mistakenly assumes he or she is superior to others, it leads to pride, as shown in this story. The leaders were stupid and stubborn; the people were insightful and open. **So who was the more spiritual in that case?**

Don't ever assume just because someone is a leader that they are automatically right and you are wrong, based on their rank and authority.

### Day Seven

35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

v. 35 – Jesus made the rounds in Galilee, teaching, preaching and healing. **What did Jesus do?** Teach, preach and heal. **What should the mission of the Church be?** It should be the same, I would think. We have the first two activities down pretty well, but lack the third, except for a few who have made healing a spectacle. Healing should be a common occurrence in the Church, since some would always have healing gifts:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

v. 36 – Jesus saw the crowds not as a bother but rather as an opportunity to show forth what the Father had sent Him to do. The focus wasn't on Him, but on the mission He had from and with the Father. Therefore Jesus saw the crowds through the eyes of compassion and not as a chance to "strut his stuff," seeing them as helpless and harassed. What Jesus did, He did out of compassion. He did not do it to make money, start a movement or establish His credentials. He healed and taught to help the people.

vs. 37&38 – Jesus knew that He alone could not do all that needed to be done, so He directed the disciples to pray that the Lord would send laborers into the great harvest because there were too few workers.

**What would cause these workers to go out into the harvest fields?** In this context, it would be compassion! **Do you do what you do because of compassion? Are you moved by what moved Jesus? How do you show it? What do you do? In what part of the harvest field do you work? What crowds with what needs to do you see and work among? Where does your compassion cause you to go?**

**And what do you do to obtain more workers for the harvest field? Do you pray? What do you pray? For what nations or groups of people? What special needs do you see that God enables you to relieve? What more can you do?** Remember, it will be done according to your faith! God sees the same harvest that you do (He has opened your eyes to see it) and will equip you to meet their needs just like Jesus did. **Do you believe that? If so, what difference does that faith make in your daily work and ministry?**