



## **13: JESUS THE AUTHENTIC ANTI CHARLATAN (Luke 4:38-44)**

One of my earliest exposures to Christianity was watching weird TV preachers.

Me and my Dad used to turn on televangelist programs and make fun of them. One thing I remember happening on these TV shows was a massive amount of healings. The televangelist would invite a line of people up to the stage, and each person, no matter what was wrong with them, whether headache, cancer, deafness, or a disabled leg, would get fully healed, at least apparently so. The wild display would end with the televangelist pushing the person down and his bodyguards catching them.

I thought it was a sham.

Later on, I found out that a lot of it truly was a sham. Many of these people who would stand in line to get healed by a televangelist wearing a toupee would not actually get healed, but it would be portrayed that they were healed for the television audiences to view. Really, many of these people would leave the scenario more hopeless than before.

Jesus, however, performed all sorts of healings. Without fail, each one of them endured. He wasn't a charlatan or con artist. He was truly the Son of God.

And to understand Jesus' healings, it's important to contextually understand the first century world that Jesus was operating in...

Ancient medical tradition included a mixture of genuinely observed cures and superstitious folk medicine. Various schools of medicine existed, and because there was no standard for certification, not all doctors were competent even by ancient standards. In the first century, Greeks comprised a disproportionate share of doctors in the Roman Empire; many were also well-educated slaves in the service of wealthy estates. Many physicians were women, although the majority of these worked as midwives.

Temples to Asclepius, the Greco-Roman god of healing, were found all over the Mediterranean world. These temples were somewhat like the spas of today; therapy consisted more of rest, massage and a modified diet than of what we would call medicine. Religion also played a major role. A common healing method was "incubation," whereby the sick person would sleep in the confines of the temple of Asclepius in the hope of receiving a dream-revelation from the god. Those who had been healed made special contributions to the temples, which often included plaster reproductions of whatever parts of their bodies had been healed. These were set on display as testimonies to the healing power of the god.

The second-century orator and chronic invalid Aelius Aristides, in his *Sacred Tales*, gives us an insight into the need people had for healing and the methods employed to that end. After falling ill on a journey to Rome and enduring brutal surgery at the hands of Roman doctors, Aristides became a devotee of Asclepius. The cures prescribed for him in the dreams included bathing in a churning river during winter, pouring mud on himself before sitting in the courtyard of the temple, walking about without shoes all winter and blood-letting from various parts of his body.

It was in such a world that Jesus performed his ministry of healing. Unlike many doctors connected to temples, Jesus healed without charge or fanfare. Also, he did not follow any specific ritual that might have been regarded as the key to tapping into magical, healing power. Sometimes he would touch a person; other times he might place a daub of mud on a blind man's eyes (Jn 9:6) or simply speak a word (Mt 8:13). In short, Jesus' healings pointed to the power of God that dwelled within him; they did not encourage

people to seek out rituals for magical healing but were part of his proclamation of the kingdom. Physical healing pointed always to the restoration of creation.<sup>1</sup>

And in Luke 4:38, begins an account of Jesus healing someone in close acquaintance with Him physically;

*38 After (Jesus) left the synagogue, he entered Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. 39 So he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up immediately and began to serve them. (Luke 4:38-39)*

Jesus made a sick-call at Simon's (the apostle Peter's) house, where Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever. As soon as the Lord rebuked the fever, it left her. The cure was not only immediate but complete, since she was able to get up and serve the household. Usually a great fever would leave a person weak and listless,<sup>2</sup> But Jesus' healing caused an invigoration in Simon's Mother in Law.

Jesus had authority over this sickness.

I remember reading passages like this when the COVID 19 pandemic was at its height in 2020, and just begging the Lord to increase my faith in Him, and to increase my trust in Him! A pandemic really put that trust to the test, as I saw friends losing loved ones, and as it seemed like the disease would never cease spreading all over the world and devastating everything!

But we can trust that Jesus has authority over the biological world.

Though we must remember that some people who are wonderfully faithful to Jesus will get very sick, or have a terrible ailment, and never see the kind of healing that this woman experienced. Like Job, they will suffer for the sake of the Lord and give God glory in their suffering. Some things simply don't make sense. In Simon Peter's Mother in Law's case, a miraculous healing had gone down!

And notice her response to the healing! This woman's actions were a reminder that when the Lord meets a need in our lives, it should always motivate us to greater service!<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Believer's Bible Commentary Copyright © 1989, 1990, 1992, 1995, 2016 by William MacDonald.

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When God moves powerfully in bringing healing to our marriage, to our trauma, to our struggles, to a friendship, to our trust, to our peace, or to something we thought would never change... Ohhhhh may we respond with praise, with service, with Kingdom building, with gospel activities, with worship, with prayer, with devotion, with dedication, and with love for Him and His people!

Luke 4:40 continues on;

*40 When the sun was setting, all those who had anyone sick with various diseases brought them to him. As he laid his hands on each one of them, he healed them. 41 Also, demons were coming out of many, shouting and saying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah. (Luke 4:40-41)*

People came to him when the sun was setting because that's when the Sabbath was over and they were free to travel.<sup>4</sup> Jesus laid His hands on **each one** of them and healed them! He didn't miss one!

Unlike the televangelists I used to watch on TV, Jesus **didn't miss!** The Kingdom of heaven had come to earth, and people were going to get a full on taste of what it would be like in eternity! Because one day a new heaven and a new earth **will** come; for the first heaven and the first earth will pass away, and the sea will be no more. There will be a holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. A loud voice from the throne will say: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with us. We will be his people, and God himself will be with us and will be our God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things will have passed away. (Rev. 21:1-4)

Jesus was giving people a taste of all of this by driving out sickness, driving out demonic power, and setting people free! He was giving people a taste of the resurrection! He still does so today, so that people will know who He is and give Him the glory He truly deserves!

Luke 4:42 continues;

*42 When it was day, he went out and made his way to a deserted place. But the crowds were searching for him. They came to him and tried to keep him from leaving them. 43*

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*But he said to them, "It is necessary for me to proclaim the good news about the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because I was sent for this purpose." 44 And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea. (Luke 4:42-44)*

Jesus's miracles authenticated his identity, but he didn't want to be known simply as a miracle worker. He had a message to announce.<sup>5</sup>

So of course, after all this powerful work had been accomplished in Capernaum, Jesus went off to a quiet and solitary place, to pray to God the Father.

And why? Because God the Father is the source of all refreshment and true life! When we're burnt out on people, when we're burned out pouring into one another as Christ followers, when we're burned out on reaching out to people in the Name of Christ, we need to return to the true source of refreshment and life ourselves! We **all** need to spend time meditating on the Word of God. We need to go for a walk and pray. We need to get alone with God. Even if it's just finally laying down in solitude after some crazy busyness! Maybe it's listening to music. Maybe it's working out. Maybe it's taking a drive. Whatever it is that helps us- the rhythm of regularly connecting with God like Jesus did will breathe life-restoring energy into our weary souls!

And of course, these crowds in Capernaum crowded in on Jesus. They wanted Him all for themselves. Maybe they were hoping for Him to authenticate Himself as Messiah on earth and politically deliver them from Rome. They certainly didn't want Him to leave their midst.

But Jesus wasn't only one to spend solitude with God. Jesus had a mission from God. He had to get the word out about who He was and continue to perform good works beyond Capernaum. He needed this message to spread out.

We, too, should not want to keep the message of Jesus to ourselves. We should not want to keep Jesus' Kingdom packed up all tidy in a box only for us to access. This good news about Christ is meant to get out. It's meant to flood the streets with love and hope. It's meant to bring healing and life and joy to the broken, death ridden, and hopeless! May we follow the example of Christ, by the power of Christ, to get the message of Christ out to those who deeply need Christ!

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