

# *Jesus*

## Our Healer



## Jesus Healing Ministry

Unquestionably, one of the chief qualities of Jesus' ministry was healing. In addition to teaching in synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, Jesus was known for "healing every disease and every affliction." (Matthew 4:23) It turns out that "every" as applied to "disease" and "affliction" was no exaggeration.

Jesus treated a range of medical issues.

- He healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (Mark 1:30-31) and cured an official's son of an illness that threatened his death. (John 4:46-54)
- He cured many of a dreaded skin disease known then as leprosy (Matthew 8:1-4), and He stopped hemorrhages. (Mark 5:24-34)
- He treated a number of orthopedic issues such as healing paralysis (Luke 5:18-26), restoring a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5), and reattaching a severed ear. (Luke 2:50-51)
- He engaged the full range of sensory impairments including blindness (John 9:1-7), muteness, and deafness. (Mark 9:17-27)
- He even delved into the spiritual domain for healing. He cast out demons and released people from demon oppression. (Matthew 8:16)
- And of course, Jesus even raised the dead. (Luke 7:11-15; John 11)



One wonders why Jesus majored in such a healing ministry. Certainly He did it to introduce His ministry to a needy world. More than that,

He did it to demonstrate His credentials. He showed He was God-incarnate, that He was the Lord of all of life and had authority over every dimension of creation. But He also did it to prove He could forgive sin (Luke 5:17-24).

At the same time, through healing Jesus revealed the merciful character of God and demonstrated God's compassion. (Luke 7:11-15) And finally, in His healing Jesus demonstrated that the salvation He was sent by the Father to proclaim starts immediately. (Luke 4:16-21)

## Apostolic Healing Ministry

And the healing ministry didn't end with Jesus.

"And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles." (Acts 2:43, ESV) Indeed, Jesus had promised "... whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12, ESV)

The "greater works" don't include things like the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Certainly those works were reserved for the incarnate Son of God. But the kinds of healings that Jesus did were duplicated during the fledgling years of the early church, and the multiplication and expansion of the ministry of the church exploded far beyond the limited geographical reach of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Just think of the range of healing miracles that were evident through the apostles!

- They healed a man who had been lame from birth (Acts 3:1-10).
- They healed the sick (Acts 5:12-16) and freed the demon possessed (Acts 5:12-16; 16:16-18; 19:11-20).
- They cured a man who had been paralyzed for eight years (Acts 9:32-35) and another who had been crippled from birth (Acts 14:8-10).
- Even Paul himself, who was stoned and left for dead, was healed (Acts 14:19-23), and God protected him from a deadly snake bite. (Acts 28:3-6)
- Indeed, even the apostles raised the dead (Acts 20:7-16).

What, then, was the purpose of the healing miracles during the time of the apostles? The author of Hebrews put it this way: "... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared

at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit..." (Hebrews 2:3-4) So the healing miracles attested to the truth of the gospel



and of Christ, and placed God's stamp of authenticity on the gospel.

The healing miracles also helped to establish the fledgling church as Paul describes in his elaboration of the supernatural gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). The signs and wonders done by the apostles also authenticated their testimony so that the New Testament came to be recognized as the Word of God, as scripture, even as was the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:15-16).

## Current Healing Ministry

Clearly, there was something unique about the apostolic period. The launching of the church and the authentication of the gospel by the witness of God Himself were critical features of the establishment of Christian ministry. But what about today? Should we expect healings to take place in our age?

First, there is no clear scriptural teaching indicating that the supernatural work of God ceased following the time of the apostles. The healing ministry of the church has, in fact, changed in some respects in the post-apostolic period. However, the scriptures provide explicit instruction regarding how a healing ministry ought to take place within the church.

The key passage is found in James 5: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will

raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (James 5:14-16, ESV)

So, in the age of the church, prayer and anointing with oil for healing is a ministry given collectively to the elders of a local church. One never knows how the healing takes place, or through whom. It comes as God responds to the prayers of these godly leaders as men and women present themselves to seek the touch of God.

And what about anointing with oil? Clearly, there is nothing magic in the oil that is used for healing. The oil is symbolic of a work of God in the life of the one presented for healing. (Mark 6:13)

According to the scriptures there are two reasons for the ministry of anointing. First, oil has been identified with the ministry of the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13). And second, anointing with oil indicates that one is set apart for a special ministry of God, as Aaron and the priests were so set apart (Exodus 29:7).



So the anointing with oil indicates that the work of the Holy Spirit is engaged with the one who submits to His ministry, and whatever the outcome, whether healing or not, the one anointed can rest assured that there is a special, purposeful ministry being done in and through God's child.

And what about the issue of confessing sin and receiving forgiveness? Why is that to be a part of the healing ministry in the church?

Well, sickness does have an integral relationship with sin. Not that every sickness can be traced to a specific sin, but that sickness and death entered the world because of sin. So whenever we find



ourselves wracked with illness, it is appropriate for us to examine ourselves, and to ask God to reveal if there is sin in our lives that needs repentance. Sometimes we may find that to be true, in which case confession before the elders is appropriate, and the opportunity for the elders to confirm the forgiveness of God is a treasured ministry. (John 20:23)

So the healing ministry of the elders is an important ministry in the local church. We should be quick to avail ourselves of such a blessed ministry.

## Questions about Healing

*Why isn't everyone healed?*

For believers in Jesus, the healing of the body is provided through His atoning sacrifice. Matthew makes that clear in quoting Isaiah 53:4 in affirming Jesus' healing ministry. (Matthew 8:14-17) And yet it is clear that not everyone is healed.

Even Paul was not healed of an ailment even after praying for its removal a number of times. (2 Corinthians 12:7) In that case, God revealed to Paul that he was to be humbled under his affliction, and that



he would learn that God would exhibit His strength through Paul's weakness.

Peter also offers an important perspective on this matter.

Through illness, God tests the genuineness of our faith, enabling us to grow in our confidence in the Lord. "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7, ESV)

So should God choose not to heal one of His own children, He surely has a sanctifying purpose for it. And of course, since all of us die physically should the Lord not soon return, God will use illness of one kind or another

to bring us home. And what a glorious healing that will be!

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together for

good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28) And as well, we recognize that the ultimate healing is reserved for our long awaited eternity in His presence.

*What is the relationship between sin and sickness?*

From a biblical perspective, sin is the ultimate origin of sickness and death. The fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) bore the fruit of sickness and death, as well as the brokenness of relationship between human beings and God, and between human beings with one another. Such dysfunction has been the legacy of humanity ever since.

So any time we are sick, we should be reminded of our broken estate and the devastating effect our human rebellion has had on our welfare. Nevertheless, we should never assume that any sickness we have bears a direct relationship with a particular sin.

That could be the case, as Paul implies about the Corinthians experiencing sickness because they misused the Lord’s Supper. (1 Corinthians 11:28-30) At the same time, Jesus makes clear that others are sick in ways that are unrelated to specific sins. (John 9:1-3) Indeed, we might want to ask the question

differently: "For a sinner such as I, why am I not sick more often?" (See Luke 13:1-5)

Only the grace of God, of course, is the answer.

## The Health of Our Lord

In the final analysis, in the healing ministry of Jesus, the health we enjoy comes from His gracious and merciful providential care. Paul wonderfully summarizes it this way:

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Corinthians 4:7-12, ESV)

And John's desire is thus an encouraging word to all who would seek a healing touch from the Lord Jesus: "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul." (3 John 2, ESV)

So "... may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23, ESV)



*Building a community of forgiveness, purpose and hope in Jesus Christ*

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