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The Great Physician

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

We have seen that the physical world is a reflection of spiritual reality, and that this is true of disease and death, health and healing. In fact, God has designed it as a **parable of the Gospel**. It is a parable told not in words but in events in people's lives, in the fabric of their existence. **There is nothing that speaks more of the reality of sin and judgment than disease and death, and there is nothing that reveals more of God's saving love and grace than healing and health.** This is why healing was Jesus' ministry, why healing was constantly part of His interaction with people, why He used healing to reveal Himself to people. What then is our role, as the Body of Christ, as His ambassadors and disciples, as He lives in and through us? First, let's look at Jesus' healing ministry.

The Great Physician

This term comes from the fact that Jesus twice referred to Himself as a physician. Once He was referring to the rejection of Himself in His native town: "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself!'" (Luke 4:23). This may be just a passing reference, although He had just read in the synagogue from Isaiah about God's servant sent to proclaim liberty, recovery, and healing.

The second instance is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus is dining with "tax collectors and sinners" at Matthew's house. When the Pharisees grumbled and asked Him why He ate with them, Jesus replied, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32).

This tells us several things:

- We, or at least some of us, are sick.
- Jesus equates this sickness with sin.
- Jesus equates healing from this sickness with repentance.
- Jesus declares Himself to be a Physician, the Physician who can deal with this disease.
- Jesus claimed to confront humanity in its deepest malady, and that He does so as the great Physician.

Jesus' Healing Ministry

How did Jesus, the great Physician, minister to people? How did He integrate physical and spiritual healing? Let's look at some specific examples, some case studies. As you look at these interactions of Jesus with others, try to put yourself into the story. Imagine how you would feel if you were the person coming to Jesus. What was your life like? Why are you seeking Him? How will you respond to what He says? In other words, try to imagine the stories as realistically as possible and think about the characters involved. Then you can better see Jesus for Who He really is.

Jesus' Ministry (Matthew 4:23-25)

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing (*therapeuo*) all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed (*therapeuo*) them. (Matthew 4:23-24, NKJV).

What three things characterized Jesus' earthly ministry? _____

What was the purpose of each? _____

What kind of therapy/healing was He providing? (Look at the Greek word). _____

What was Jesus' ministry?

- **Teaching** – communicating the nature and purpose of God's Kingdom
- **Preaching** – proclaiming that God's Kingdom had come, that now is the time of salvation
- **Healing** – both demonstrating, giving a sign, that the Kingdom had come, and ushering people into the Kingdom. It was both a demonstration of the gospel and God's grace, and a method of

leading people to Himself. In fact, these three were His sole methods in proclaiming the Kingdom of God, the message of God's grace that salvation had come, and in leading people to Himself, to follow Him. They either responded to His message or to His healing.

Jesus' Motivation

What motivated Jesus to heal people, to carry on His ministry? See Matthew 9:35-38, John 11:28-37, John 17:1-5.

Jesus Mission

What was Jesus' mission, of which healing was a part? See Mark 10:45, Luke 19:10, John 4:34, 9:4-5. _____

❖ The Suffering Servant (**Matthew 8:16-17**)

When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed (*therapeuo*) all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "*He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.*" (Matthew 8:16-17, NKJV).

It says that Jesus cured them of their diseases. Matthew says that this fulfilled a prophecy, demonstrating that Jesus "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." Is there any indication that Jesus did this literally, physically taking on the disease of those whom He healed? _____

What then does this statement demonstrate about the source of physical and spiritual healing? _____

This reference demonstrates the physical reflection of spiritual reality. Jesus' bearing of our sin on the cross makes possible both physical and spiritual healing. We (and our patients) owe it all to Him. What a servant Physician is Jesus! (Isaiah 53)

❖ **The Paralytic (Matthew 9:2-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26)**

And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" --He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:1-12, NKJV).

Here we have a paralytic, whose friends will find any way to get him to Jesus. Obviously he is seeking physical healing. What does Jesus say to him, what healing does He perform? _____

Which is the greater gift, forgiveness of sins or physical healing?

What other reason does Jesus give for His healing ministry? **According to Jesus, what is the purpose of the physical healing He provided?**

The question Jesus posed to them reveals the answer – they could neither forgive his sins nor heal him; they are equally impossible for

man. Jesus, by healing him, demonstrated that He also could forgive sins. He has authority in both the physical and spiritual realms. He heals the more profound, pervasive, and costlier disease. Here Jesus reveals the parallel between healing from disease and forgiveness of sins that we have been discussing. Indeed, He states that the reason He is healing the man is so that the spiritual truth, forgiveness of sins, will be revealed. Both are based on Jesus and on Jesus alone. What a powerful and comprehensive Physician we have in Jesus!

❖ **The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)**

Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, "Is not this he who sat and begged?" Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him." He said, "I am he." Therefore they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." Then they said to him, "Where is He?" He said, "I do not know." (John 9:1-12, NKJV).

What was the disciples' perspective on the cause of the man's disease?

What was wrong with their perspective, their two options? (Think of Job's friends.) _____

What was right about their perspective? Cf. Romans 5:12-21

What option does Jesus offer? _____

Note: some feel that the passage does not say that the reason for the man's blindness is so that the works of God may be revealed because this implies that God afflicted this man with blindness just so he could be an object lesson. These commentators would place a period at the end of the statement "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." End of statement. Now Jesus says that it does present an opportunity to display the works of God. This interpretation may be correct; however, God does afflict or allow affliction of man for a variety of reasons that we neither like nor understand. Think of Job, also Lazarus, of whose sickness Jesus says, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." In Romans 9, Paul says that God may choose to make some vessels destined for destruction, in order to bring Himself glory. This is not an easy teaching, but it is there. It is not for us to discern the cause of people's diseases. Regardless of the cause of the man's disease, Jesus uses it as an opportunity to glorify God and to reveal Himself to the man.

Notice the progression of the man's thinking as the story progresses, during his discourse:

What was the man's understanding of his healing (vv. 11,15)?

What was the man's impression of Jesus (vv. 17, 24-25)? _____

What conclusion did the man draw (v.30-33)? _____

What did the Pharisees do to him? _____

What is the ultimate result of this encounter (vv. 35-38)? What kind of follow-up therapy did Jesus provide? _____

Jesus was not terribly concerned with the cause of this man’s disease; rather, His mission was to do the work of God, which in this case was healing the man, releasing him from his congenital affliction. Note that what the man said is true: there is nothing in the Old Testament about the healing of congenital blindness. As a result, he was cast out of his social and religious community. Jesus did not stop with just physically healing him; He both saved his soul, and brought him into a new community, the family of God and His church. What a thorough and kind physician Jesus is!

❖ **The Nobleman’s Son** (John 4:46-54)

So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal (*iaomai*) his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!" Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!" Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household. This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee. (John 4:46-54, NKJV).

Here we have a desperate father, whose son is at the point of death.

Doubtless everything else had been tried; nothing else could be done.

What was Jesus’ response, which referred to the people in general, but also included the father? _____

The man remained fixed in his purpose, and asks Jesus to “come.”

What was Jesus’ response? _____

What did the man do in response and why? _____

What was the ultimate outcome of Jesus’ interaction with this man?

Something happened to the man as he met with Jesus; Jesus had said that he required a sign in order to believe, and the man did not argue, just asked Him again to come. But when Jesus said “Go, your son

lives” the man did not hesitate, nor did he leave in anguish or anger. Rather, he believed what Jesus had said. Jesus intended to heal the boy; He loved him more than his father did. However, Jesus first cut down to this man’ heart and revealed the real issue. Furthermore, He required that this man believe without first receiving a sign, only a promise, and that he show this belief through obedience. After the sign was given, his faith grew and even multiplied. (Also note that the healing occurred at a distance; Jesus did not need to be present in order for healing to occur). What an astute and prescient Physician we have in Jesus!

❖ **The Centurion’s Servant** (Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10)

Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal (*therapeuo*) him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed (*iaomai*). "For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! "And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed (*iaomai*) that same hour. (Matthew 8:5-13, NKJV).

How did he recognize his position compared to Jesus? What was his posture, his tone, in approaching Jesus? _____

What was his request of Jesus based upon? _____

He recognized that Jesus was under authority and therefore in authority – He had authority over demons, disease, death, over all the forces of nature.

What kind of healing did Jesus offer? (Look at the Greek word).

What did the centurion recognize about Jesus' ability, based on His authority? (Look at the Greek word). What this an aspect of His great faith? _____

What kind of healing ultimately took place? _____

Jesus is King of King and Lord of Lords, the Ultimate Authority (given to Him by His Father). Who else has the power over life and death, over disease and healing? Who else can heal completely, physically and spiritually? What an awesome and powerful Physician we have in Jesus!

❖ **The Woman with Hemorrhage** (Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48)

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well (*sozo*)."
Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed (*iaomai*) of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well (*sozo*). Go in peace, and be healed (*hugies*) of your affliction." (Mark 5:25-34, NKJV).

What had physicians done for her? What had this cost her physically and financially? _____

What was the social effect of her condition? Cf. Leviticus 15:25-27

What did Jesus require of her? _____

What did Jesus do for her as a result, beyond the initial *iaomai*? _____

Note that this is the only recorded occasion in which Jesus referred to a woman as “daughter.” He adopted this woman, healed but penniless, scorned, separated from her community for 12 years, into the family of God, and He did so publically. He also clarified the fact that it was her faith, not her touching of His robe, that healed her. He then pronounced His blessing upon her as His daughter, “Be of good courage; go into peace.” What a compassionate and remarkable Physician is Jesus!

❖ **Jarius’ Daughter** (Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43, Luke 8:40-56)

So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed (*therapeuo*) by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed (*iaomai*) immediately. And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well (*sozo*). Go in peace." While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher." But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well (*sozo*)." When He came into the house, He permitted no one to go in except Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened. (Luke 8:40-56, NKJV).

Jarius’ daughter is at the very point of dying. What did he believe in confidence Jesus could do?

Note that his *only* daughter had brought him joy for the same number of years as the woman had suffered. Is there any significance to this fact? _____

Note that the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage interrupts Jesus' healing of Jarius' daughter. How do you think this made Jarius feel, particularly when his daughter finally died? _____

What was Jesus' response to Jarius? _____

How far did Jesus' power extend? _____

What was Luke, the physician's, description of exactly what happened (v.55)? What does this tell you about the nature of man and death?

What care did Jesus, the great Physician, care for her next? _____

Jesus cared for this girl more than even her father did, and knew that even death was weaker than He was. He also knew that, though her body was dead, her soul, her personhood, lived on, and He could reunite the two again, calling her spirit back, as He did with Lazarus and the son of the widow Nain. He demonstrated great tenderness and compassion for the father, and again for the family, banishing their fear. He also was very tender with the girl; what Jesus really said to her was, "Little lamb, arise." As if that were not enough, He then commanded someone to get her something to eat. He had just raised her from the dead! One would think He would have stopped there. He truly cared for the whole patient. What a loving, tender, and omnipotent Physician we have in Jesus!

Conclusions

How does Jesus' healing ministry fit with the framework we have been constructing? Does His ministry display these truths about disease, death, health, and healing? _____

What traits, what characteristics, did Jesus have as a healer?

Jesus restored people physically, relationally with individuals and community, including the community of faith, mentally, spiritually, emotionally.

Implications

What are the implications of this study so far? Does it change anything about your view of disease and death, of health and healing? Does it affect the way you think, your perspective, on health care? Does it have any bearing on the way you will care for patients?

Here are some questions to begin to think about.

- Do we cure or heal anyone? Do physicians, nurses, etc. restore anyone to health?
- What then is our role?
- Is being free from physical disease equivalent to being healthy?
- Can you be in health and still have physical disease/infirmity?
- Is it Biblical to treat just physical disease?
- Do patients present with physical symptoms of non-physical disease?
- Does physical disease have impact on people spiritually? Does physical health?

- Does spiritual disease have impact on people physically? Does spiritual health?
- Did healing take place outside of the normative laws of physics and chemistry? Does God intervene at times and supercede them?
- Is there any Biblical justification for saying that such healing does not occur now? Cf. The healings in Acts, etc.
- Demonic possession and also affliction (2 Corinthians 12:7, Job 2:7, 1 Peter 5:8) was a common source of disease in the Bible. Is there any Biblical justification for saying that such disease does not occur now? Cf. Ephesians 6
- What is the proper role and place of science and biomedicine?
- What is God's priority in healing?
- How is God working in someone's life through disease, death, healing, and health issues?
- How can God use us in that situation?
- Is the disease theory of medicine true/Biblical? The germ theory?
- What do you think is true about energy field-flux theories of disease?
- Was Jesus the master diagnostician, the consummate clinician? Is He still? Does He live in you?
- What motivated Jesus? Was it compassion and love? Do we have this for our patients? Does Jesus? Does Jesus live in you?
- Jesus masterfully moved into His patients' lives, never condemning them, or blaming their disease on some grievous personal sin; at the same time, however, he called them out on the very issue that was keeping them from Himself, calling them to repentance, reconciliation, restoration, and relationship. Can we be this expert with our patients? Does Jesus still do this? Does Jesus live in you?