

Understanding the Testaments, Part 2

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- [0 : 00] If you take a look in your bulletin, the title of the message this morning is Understanding the Testaments.
- And I would like you to please turn to the book of Matthew, chapter 8. And in Matthew, chapter 8, we will be looking at the first 13 verses.
- When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. And a leper came to him and bowed down before him and said, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.
- Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I am willing, be cleansed. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.
- And Jesus said to him, See that you tell no one, but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded as a testimony to them.
- [1 : 30] And Jesus entered Capernaum. A centurion came to him, imploring him, and saying, Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented.
- Jesus said to him, I will come and heal him. But the centurion said, Lord, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof.
- But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.
- And I say to this one, go, and he goes. And to another, come, and he comes. And to my slave, do this, and he does it.
- Now when Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who were following, Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.
- [2 : 44] I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.
- But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing teeth.
- And Jesus said to the centurion, Go, it shall be done for you as you have believed. And the servant was healed that very moment.
- It's truly a remarkable passage of scripture, like so many that are found in the gospels, where our Lord simply at will exercised miraculous healing powers that no one denied.
- Everyone who was healed was able to authenticate the healing, and everyone who witnessed the healing were able to see that this was something genuine.
- [3 : 54] Because I've known so-and-so for years, and he's been blind as long as I've known him. And now he sees. What possible explanation could there be for that?
- This kind of power and ability has to come from someone who is exalted well above humanity to be able to do this.

Because no surgeon and no doctor that we know of is able to perform these kind of things. I don't believe there was anything that so distinguished our Lord, or so gathered so much attention as the miracles that he performed.

And, well, it should be. Because, actually, to be able to do this, to be able to address the conditions that he did, and resolve them in a way that resulted in a normal human being, nobody can do that.

You just can't do it. It doesn't make any difference how much you want to. It doesn't make any difference how worthy the object is who needs healing, or the person who needs healing.

[5 : 02] You just don't have that ability. And when you come to these miracles, we have to make some kind of a decision, as the people did back then.

But here's the problem. How is it possible for someone to actually be an eyewitness and experience these things and still not believe?

What kind of dynamic is at work here that would allow them to completely turn a deaf ear to what Jesus has to say and be able to dismiss the miraculous healings that he engaged in without getting on board and without what's taking place here?

What's going on anyway? You've heard the expression that seeing is believing. And Jesus gave them a lot of things to look at. And you know, this is one of the things that characterize the nation of Israel.

And this is what the apostle was referring to when he himself, a Jew, referred to his own people. And he said that Jews require a sign. And I want you to keep this in mind because it is critical to our understanding of the whole Bible.

[6 : 24] And knowing these things will enable you to make sense of the scriptures like you perhaps never were able to at all. When we talk about miracles and we see demonstrations of them repeatedly in the Gospels, and the people were just absolutely dazzled at these.

And they followed him in crowds, huge crowds, and they would form lines and they would wait to be here. And the text says in a number of places, And Jesus healed them all.

That just bowls me over. He didn't say to any of them, Well, yours is a particularly difficult case. Could you come back next week? None of that. He healed them all.

And they were instantaneous healings, except one. And I don't have the ability to put a handle on that. I don't quite understand that. And that was the man who was healed with the second touch.

Remember, Jesus touched the man. He was blind. And instead of the man saying, I see or I see clearly, what he said was, I see men walking as trees.

[7 : 42] Keep in mind, this man probably had never seen anything before. He may have been born blind. And then the text says, And Jesus touched him the second time, and he saw clearly.

I have no idea what's going on there. And I simply cannot believe for a moment that he wasn't able to affect a complete healing with the first touch. So Jesus is saying, Oh, well, I better put a little more effort into it.

No, no, no, no. That does not fit him at all. But there is a reason why there was a second touch. And we might want to study that out and see what we could come up with.

But at any rate, nothing so characterized and identified his person like these miracles. And when he came at night one time, or someone came to him, Nicodemus, a man who distinguished himself with the exchange that he had with Jesus.

And there's all kinds of theories as to why he came at night. But at any rate, he approached our Lord and said, Rabbi, and that's how the Jews regarded him. The word Rabbi simply means teacher in Hebrew.

[8 : 49] He says, Rabbi, we know that you must have come from God, for no man can do these miracles that you do, except God be with him.

And Nicodemus was wise enough to know there simply is no other explanation. You have to have been sent from God. And as I've shared with you in the past, if you go through John's gospel, in those 21 chapters, you will find 44 times, in 21 chapters, if you don't miss any of them, a phrase that Jesus constantly uses in saying, he who sent me, or him that sent me, or I was sent by him, or I came from him.

44 times in the gospel of John, Jesus authenticates his origin and his arrival and why he is there on earth.

And then Nicodemus, of course, seconds that by saying, we know that you come from God because no one can do these miracles that you do. So my question to you today is, what do you do with these miracles?

If you have never placed your personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ, may I ask, what is the reason you give yourself for not having done that?

[10 : 29] Is it because you have not personally seen this yourself like they did? Is it because you're thinking, well, if I could see what they saw and it would be demonstrated before me, the eyes of the blind being opened or the lame being healed, then I would believe.

But I'm not going to believe it on their word. Well, what do you do with other historical evidence? Do you have to have everything presented to you and demonstrated to you so that you will believe?

Are you willing to believe in the assassination of President Lincoln? You didn't witness it. You weren't there. You didn't see it. What makes you think that's a credible account?

Can you not look back at history and say, well, there were plenty of people there who did see it and John Wilkes Booth is the one who did it and they caught him and blah, blah, blah. And there was a funeral train and the whole nation was in mourning and everybody knows that Lincoln was shot and everybody knows who did it and everybody knows that he died.

And you don't think for a moment, do you, that all of the records in the books and in the newspapers and the magazines and everything, you don't think that stuff was all just made up and that Lincoln wasn't really shot because you didn't see it.

[11 : 46] You weren't there, but the evidence suffices for you, doesn't it? I mean, you're able to say, well, these are credible witnesses and there are certainly enough of them to verify and establish that and I don't have any doubt at all that Abraham Lincoln was shot at Ford Theater by John Wilkes Booth.

I believe that. Do you realize that the evidence for the miracles and the life of Jesus Christ is far greater than it was for the president's assassination, even though that was a little more than a hundred years ago and Jesus was 2,000 years ago.

Yet the evidence and the witnesses is absolutely overwhelming. So if we cannot accept it on the basis of the historical evidence and what is written, there must be another problem.

What could that be? If it has nothing to do with not having adequate information, it must be due to something else.

What's left? Well, there are only two things, two ways of looking at this. One is that someone is saying there is not enough evidence so I cannot believe.

[13 : 08] But I think we've already been able to establish that with reasonable people that the evidence is conclusive for Lincoln and for Jesus. So if it isn't a I cannot believe, the only thing that's left is I will not believe.

Well, why would anyone take that position? I will not believe. Because that becomes an issue of the will. It has nothing to do with having insufficient evidence because the evidence is sufficient.

What then is the impediment? The impediment is your will. You don't want to believe and you're not going to believe.

And the reason you're not going to believe is because you have a hunch of where that belief will take you and you don't want to go there. that belief that belief you know from other people other Christians other people in your in your knowledge that you are associated with you know the change that it made you know the difference that came about etc.

And you don't want any part of that. You want to maintain who you are where you are and what you are and you're not going to believe. hard as it is to imagine there were multitudes of people like that.

[14 : 37] Look at the text if you will here in Matthew's Gospel where are we chapter 8 yes chapter 8 this man who came to Jesus this is well it starts out with a leper and we don't you know we don't even we don't even have a leper colony here used to be one years and years ago in a place called Carville, Louisiana there was a leper colony but since probably I don't know since maybe the 1987 80s something like that the leper colony was closed and done away with because we've been able to get on top of that and it's been pretty well discovered in medical science that leprosy is a virus a very deadly virus but in biblical days there was absolutely no cure if you came down with leprosy you were terminal it's just a question of how long you were going to be able to survive your nose would your nose would fall off and your fingers would decay right before you almost like a corpse and fall off and you would lose digits and I remember

Phil Yancey who authored a book with Dr. Paul Brand called Fearfully and Wonderfully Made probably some of you read that book amazing Dr. Paul Brand was a physician surgeon in India and he specialized he specialized in amputating the toes and attaching them to their hands as thumbs can you imagine such a thing and he did that routinely so leprosy is still a very deadly thing in places third world countries like India and so on and this man was a leper and these lepers were isolated from everybody else they had to carry a big couple of paddles wherever they'd go and remember the story about the ten lepers and Jesus healed all ten of them wow healed ten lepers and only one of the ten came back to thank him remember that and where these people would go they carried these big big boars kind of like kind of like a couple of oversized ping pong paddles and everywhere they'd go they'd travel in groups and they'd come into a town and they'd clap these paddles together and say unclean unclean unclean and everybody would clear the way because you'd give the lepers plenty of room and this man the only other person we know that was ever healed of leprosy was Naaman in 2 Kings chapter 5 with Elijah and the seven dips in the muddy

Jordan River remember that it's another story we'll go there but it's still leprosy and this man was a leper Jesus healed him and he told him don't tell anybody about this now go show yourself to the priest what's that got to do with anything because under the Old Testament law when someone came down with a skin rash or disease of course it was always fearful as all get out that it was leprosy but it might not be it might be just a rash or a blemish or something at any rate the individual was supposed to go to the priest and the priest would examine it now I guess you'd say he was the closest thing you could get to a medical doctor in that day and he would examine the rash and he was someone who was experienced in looking at leprosy and what it looked like in the early stages and what not and the priest would be able to pronounce the person either clean no that's not leprosy that's just what is eczema

I guess maybe they didn't know what to call it skin rash or something else and that's okay and he would be free to circulate in society but if the priest says oh that looks yes that looks like the real thing and he would quarantine the person and tell him to come back in maybe a week or ten days when the thing would either be advanced further or it would dissipate and prove that it wasn't leprosy at all but the priest was the official one who had to diagnose whether that person could stay and circulate in public or whether they had to be quarantined with other lepers this man was a leper and Jesus cleansed him and he told him to go show himself to the priest for a testimony and when he entered Capernaum this is just fascinating stuff he entered Capernaum a centurion came to him who is this this is a goyim this is an uncircumcised Gentile a Roman soldier a centurion

Roman soldier who was in charge of a hundred men we would probably call him maybe a first lieutenant or a second lieutenant he was a centurion he was an officer in the Roman army not a Jew Gentile stationed there in Israel and the Jews hated these centurions they hated all Jews they hated all Romans just because they were there occupying their land so he's got a servant this centurion has a servant that he's obviously very attached to and he says my servant is lying paralyzed at home suffering great pain have no idea what the official diagnosis is but this guy was in a bad way and the centurion asked Jesus if he would come and heal him and the centurion says this is this is wonderful because it shows a spirit of humility in this Gentile and he says

[20 : 31] I'm not qualified for you to come under my roof that's another way of saying sir I'm a Gentile right and you are a Jew and everybody knows that the Jews and the Samaritans have no dealings and the Jews and the Gentiles have no dealings if they can help it and he said I'm not even worthy for you to set foot inside my house but if you will just say the word my servant will be healed and then he goes with the authority issue this guy is absolutely brilliant he's a lot more forward thinking and understanding than what the Jews were and that's what makes this case so outstanding he says I too am a man under authority with soldiers under me and I say to this one go and he goes and to another come and he comes and to my slave do this and he does it and what he is implying is you sir are obviously a man of great authority you are able to command a disease to leave and it does the whole principle of authority is what's in question here and Jesus heard this he said to those who following following him probably most all of whom were Jews he says truly

I say to you I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel that's just another way of saying when it comes to faith this unbelieving Gentile outstrips the Jewish people that is a real put down for his own people and a real acknowledgement for those who are not Jews I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel remember he said on another occasion if the mighty works woe unto you Chorazin these are Jewish cities Chorazin Bethsaida Capernaum all Jewish cities located on the sea of Galilee and he said if the mighty miracles that have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would have believed well where is Tyre and Sidon that's clear out of the country those are

Gentiles they're not Jews what do you expect from Gentiles by way of belief nothing zero they were just into into polytheism the worship of many gods they had a god for this and a god for that this is amazing and Jesus is here deriding his own people who if anybody ought to know better they certainly should and then I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel and I say to you and here this is for more Gentiles I say to you many shall come from east and west who are they going to be Gentiles Jews make up two-tenths of one percent of the world's population numerically they are almost incidental strategically they are very key and very much involved in the plan program of

God and when he says come from the east and the west he is talking about Gentiles and they will recline at table with Abraham Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven well where is that kingdom of heaven well let me tell you dear friends this is not it but let me also tell you that the majority position of Christendom believe that it is now let that sink in the majority of Christendom and I'm talking about Roman Catholicism which presents the larger number and virtually the larger percentage of Protestantism along with Catholicism believe the hymn we sang this morning Jesus shall reign where e'er the son doth its successive journeys run they believe

Jesus is reigning now this is the kingdom of heaven come to earth we are living in it it is a spiritual kingdom and that Jesus is ruling and reigning in the hearts of believers well you can understand Jesus ruling and reigning the individual in the heart of the believer if the believer is committed to the Lord but the stretch is to say that this is the kingdom we are living in it now well where are the kingdom conditions there aren't any do you realize that in the kingdom conditions when one dies at the age of a hundred he will thought to be a child do you realize that when the kingdom comes in the kingdom conditions the desert will blossom like the rose in the kingdom conditions the lame man will leap like a heart in the kingdom conditions the lion will eat straw like an ox in the kingdom conditions the knowledge of the

[26 : 10] Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea and you're telling me that this is the kingdom that we're living in it wow that is a stretch well this isn't the kingdom and Jesus isn't reigning do you know who's reigning Satan's reigning open your eyes for Pete's sake Satan is calling the shots on this planet Jesus said so he calls him the prince of this world in second corinthians 4 he's the god of this age he is the destroyer the deceiver the maligner the confuser the accuser he's all of these things he is orchestrating a huge conspiracy consisting of multitudes of people who don't even know they're part of it how's that for deceit for smarts 1st

John tells us that the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one it gives the expression from the original as maybe as a lap dog would settle down in your lap and be cozy uncomfortable and at home sitting in your lap that's the way the world is in the lap of Satan and the world doesn't even have a clue as I've said they don't even have a clue that they don't have a clue this is why they are referred to as blind the God of this age hath blinded the minds of those who believe not lest or so that the glorious light of the gospel of Christ does not shine unto them because that changes everything so we have this gospel to preach and when we do people are confronted with a decision to make and so are you right now and here is your opportunity to make one

I don't know if you have been reluctant unwilling or what to own Christ as your savior but if you have this is your chance to turn everything around and you know what God would be delighted if you did would you pray with me please father we recognize that there may be honest legitimate intellectual problems that people have with embracing Christ as their savior but we realize also that they have to consider the evidence and the evidence the evidence is overwhelming for anyone willing to look at it and if there is an impediment there that leaves nothing but a matter of the will yes in our own and contrary to our own best interests we are all capable of being stubborn and unwilling to do what we know we ought to do because we fear of where that might lead us and our prayer for anyone here who may be in that position is that the spirit of

God will convince them in ways that we cannot that to embrace and to own the Lord Jesus Christ is to not only enter into eternal life and sins forgiven but it is to be a partaker of a peace that passes all understanding and that's and that's what we would pray for anyone here who has been stubborn resistant unwilling to yield to what they know they ought to do maybe a child an adult man or woman we are all capable of that kind of stubbornness and if that should be the case we pray that you will reveal that to anyone that they may examine their own heart and mind and be honest about it and honest to you and say Lord Jesus the evidence is overwhelming and I acknowledge that and for whatever reason

I've given whatever excuse I've used up to this point I just want to lay it aside and I want to embrace you who provided all of that evidence and I best as I know how with doubts and fears and questions and everything else I just want to surrender myself to you and if you are the God the Bible says you are you will receive me and forgive me and change my life make me your child give me that peace that passes all understanding here am I Lord Jesus I'm delivering the goods I'm trusting you no excuses no holdout I embrace you as my Savior and I thank you for dying on that cross for my sin I want you to come into my life and do with me what you want because you bought and paid for me and I belong to you thank you for what you have already done and will do in my life in

[31 : 37] Christ's wonderful name amen if you made that your prayer dear friend God will hear you and I hope you will tell someone else and give them an opportunity to encourage you or let me know because I've got some literature that will be very helpful to you so thank you for being here today and by the way it's gotten quite warm in here do you think do you think that perhaps spring has finally made it I hope so maybe next week Mother's Day next week we'll look forward to using the AC okay you are dismissed God bless you on OK