

Connect360: Christ the Healer

December 2, 2019

- *Lesson 3 in the BaptistWay Press Connect360 unit “Miracles: The Transforming Power of Jesus” focuses on Matthew 8:14-17.*

Matthew’s first-century audience was primarily Jewish, a culture where women were often considered expendable. They weren’t allowed past a certain point on temple grounds, were sometimes treated as commodities, and could be divorced and left destitute with little more than a word. Therefore, readers of that day probably didn’t expect to learn that Jesus—a rabbi and leader of men—cared so personally about an ailing woman.

This pericope (a single coherent unit of thought in the Scripture text) is one of two miracles (see the other in 8:5-13) introducing Jesus’ ministry in Capernaum, his home base in Galilee. As was customary in the first century, families lived multi-generationally, and Peter married before becoming a Christ-follower (see also 1 Corinthians 9:5). Jesus perhaps even lived with Peter’s family when in Capernaum, since he depended on hospitality for survival (cf. 8:20), so he may have regarded Peter’s mother-in-law as a close friend or adopted aunt or mother. We know nothing else about her, from Scripture or ancient texts, but the fever may indicate she had malaria, or perhaps flu, pneumonia or intestinal disease. Regardless, it was severe. Bedridden by her sickness (8:14) and without effective treatment, death was a presumed outcome.

Jesus touched her

Jesus saw her lying there and responded in a way counter-cultural to Levitical law, just as he’d done with the leprous man in 8:1-4 as he grasped her hand, and the “the fever left her” (8:15). In a culture ignorant of germs,

bacteria and microorganisms, fevers were mysterious and considered a disease in and of themselves. Therefore, for a touch to bring instant healing was astonishing and evidence of God at work. However, that wasn't all; she "got up and waited on him." Jesus' healing was instant and thorough. Her response to get up and serve not only proved complete healing but was likely an expression of gratitude.

Jesus has authority and power over illness, demonic influence and nature. The heart of the gospel is this: sin maimed the perfect world God created, and Jesus is the only way it can find redemption. The work of the cross is far greater than healing from sickness. Though Isaiah's prophecy promised the Messiah would heal physical ailments, it did not guarantee cures for everyone in this lifetime, but the new covenant assures us all we will find healing in the age to come.

Compiled by Stan Granberry, marketing coordinator for BaptistWay Press.

To learn more about BaptistWay Press and the Connect360 Bible study series, or to order materials, click [here](#).