

■ LIFE OF JESUS

May 30, 2021 | Jesus Raises the Leader's Daughter and Heals the Afflicted

PREPARATION

GETTING READY

- Read Matthew 9:1–8 and 14–17 to become familiar with the context of this passage.
- Read Matthew 9:18–34.
- Pray that God would transform your heart so you may receive His message as new wineskins receive new wine.

THIS WEEK

■ KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

Jesus's ministry opened a new age in God's work with humanity.

■ THEOLOGY APPLIED

A new age entails a new way of defining how God works among us. If we are to be impacted by God's work, we have to allow Jesus to define what that work is and how it is being done. We do not get to decide how He works.

■ MEDITATE

"And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, 'Never was anything like this seen in Israel'" (Matthew 9:33).

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart for the truths you will encounter this week and to connect this passage's main point to your own life.

Q: *When does it become inappropriate or harmful to hold on to “the way we have always done things”?*

Q: *Can conservatism ever become idolatrous?*

The scientific revolution allowed for unprecedented advances in medical knowledge and practice. We are continually learning more about how the human body functions, how to diagnose illnesses, and how to treat diseases. It is amazing how far we have come. What amounted to a death sentence a century or more ago can now be cured with a pill or prevented with a shot. It can be quite alarming from our modern perspective to encounter the medical theories and practices from a bygone era. For example, it was once thought smoking cigarettes could be an effective treatment for asthma. Outdated medical practices simply have no place in modern society. Could you imagine a doctor continuing to hold to medical practices we know to be invalid?

A similar situation was emerging with the ministry of Jesus. In the passage prior to the text for this week’s lesson, Jesus asserted that His ministry was initiating a new age in the world, and His followers must be able to operate under the rules and expectations of this new age in order to receive Him and His message. He used an analogy that would have connected better with His audience than it does with us, but His point is easily grasped. He compared the ages to wineskins and His teaching to new wine. Jesus observed that no one would fill old wineskins with new wine. New wine needs to age properly before it can be consumed. Before the new wine was ready to be consumed, the old wineskins would have become cracked and unable to hold the wine anymore. In the same way, people committed to the way God worked before His arrival would not be able to hold the teachings of Jesus. In their commitment to the old age, they had become like old wineskins and were unable to hold Jesus’s teaching.

Holding on to the old age, which was prior to Jesus’s ministry, would be like a modern doctor holding on to antiquated medical practices. Jesus’s life and ministry change how we relate to God, and there is no holding on to or going back to the way things were.

Q: *What are some of the ways our society operates in opposition to the order of the new age ushered in by the ministry of Jesus Christ?*

Q: *Some people make an idol out of tradition or the status quo, but others make an idol of change. How is this idolatry also a challenge to the way Jesus has ordered this age?*

APPLICATION POINT – The death of George Floyd and several other incidents over the past year have reignited concerns about racism within our country and have led to a national conversation over the extent of racism in our nation and the measures needed to combat it. Sadly, it seems this conversation has been saddled with the burden of worldly attempts to solve a spiritual problem. Even the newest and most radical “answers” are little more than dressed-up versions of measures that have been tried in the past and have failed. We keep trying to solve this issue by putting new wine into old wineskins. Christians have a far greater tool to fight racism, no matter what form it takes. According to Paul, Jesus, with His death upon the cross, has broken down the hostility existing between the races and has formed one new humanity united in the gospel (Ephesians 2:14–15). The problem of racism has been solved for us in the gospel! We just have to accept the solution of the new age Christ ushered in rather than running through the same unsuccessful strategies the world has already tried. We will never overcome racism apart from the gospel of Christ. As we engage the world around us on this topic, be an advocate for the solution offered and guaranteed by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

+Matthew 9:18–34 shows how the people of Jesus’s time struggled with the transition between the ages. Jesus changed everything, and change is often hard to accept even when it brings the miraculous flourishing seen in these stories. These verses are meant to help us embrace the meaning of Jesus in a fallen world.

1. THE SUFFERING WOMAN

2. THE RULER’S DAUGHTER

3. THE BLIND MEN AND THE DEMON POSSESSED MAN

GOING DEEPER

+This section will look closely at each of these stories to show how Jesus challenged the assumptions and expectations of the old age as He inaugurated the new age with His ministry.

1. THE SUFFERING WOMAN

■ MATTHEW 9:20–22

Q: *According to Leviticus 15:25, What would this woman's illness have made her?*

Q: *How does this woman's plan to be healed contrast with what is said in Leviticus 15:19, 27?*

The woman in this passage had suffered for twelve years with an illness described simply as “a discharge of blood,” which according to the Old Testament, made her unclean. This is a foreign concept for us, but the “unclean-ness” caused by her illness prohibited her from participating in communal worship and made her an outcast in the community. Thus, she not only suffered physically, she suffered socially as well.

After such a long illness, the community, and perhaps even the woman herself, would have written her off as a lost cause. According to the Old Testament law, this woman had no hope of rejoining society and living a normal life. This was “old wineskin” thinking, however! The woman recognized something in Jesus's ministry that helped her see that if she touched him, she would be healed and made clean. For her to touch anyone would make them unclean, but touching Jesus was the key to transforming her life.

Q: *What would your reaction be if you faced this woman's illness?*

Q: *Can Christians ever despair?*

APPLICATION POINT – Christians can and will face trials and hardships in life. They can feel disappointment. But for Christians, pain and disappointment should never lead to despair. Just like this woman, our lives have been forever changed by the power of Christ. This transformation means our lives should be marked by joy in all circumstances, even when facing tremendous and long-lasting hardship (James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6). Despair is an “old wineskin” outlook once we have committed to following Christ. Following Christ can be costly, but we are called to joyfully pay the price. Memorize James 1:2 or 1 Peter 1:6 this week in preparation for the inevitable trials you will face when following Christ fully. Embracing the worldview behind these verses will keep you from despair.

Q: *According to Leviticus 15:28, how long does it take for a woman to be cleansed from her discharge?*

Q: *What steps are needed in Leviticus 15:29–30 for the woman’s uncleanness to be atoned?*

Although what is described in Leviticus 15 clearly underlies what we read in our passage, we cannot compare the two passages as easily as we would like. For example, Jesus said the woman’s faith “made her well.” Does this mean she was just healed, or does it imply she was also made clean in the Old Testament sense? Whatever the case, noting several contrasts will help us appreciate the point Matthew was making. According to Levitical law, the cleansing process takes eight days. But Matthew emphasized the instantaneous resolution to this woman’s illness. Levitical law requires two birds to be sacrificed for atonement, but Jesus did not indicate any need for the woman to carry out this ritual. Levitical law demands the woman who had suffered the discharge see a priest, but Jesus did not even make this demand of her. Since Jesus upholds the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17–20), we should not think He was unconcerned with these issues. Instead, these instructions find their fulfillment in Jesus in way greater than what is proscribed in the Old Testament. Holding to these requirements would be putting new wine—Jesus’s healing—in old wineskins—the Old Testament regulations.

Q: *How is what we have in Christ a better solution than what was provided for Israel in the Old Testament?*

Q: *Are you holding to inadequate rituals to resolve your guilt from sin?*

APPLICATION POINT – The Old Testament provided a very limited way for people to restore their relationship with God. Their sacrifices were finite, so their restoration was always temporary. If a woman went through the cleansing process described in Leviticus 15 but then suffered a reoccurrence of her discharge, she had to start over again. The entire system suffered from an insufficient resolution.

In Christ, however, we are promised an eternal solution to all that would keep us from God. We do not have to

repeat the same rituals every time we sin or every year. We do not have to wonder if we have performed our duty satisfactorily. Like this woman, we merely need to place our faith in Jesus. This is a certain hope, one that was never quite available to the Israelites and is certainly not available to those who seek acceptance through the latest fashion, drug or alcohol use, money, sex, power, or anything else our world has to offer. If you are putting your faith in the things this world has to offer, commit this week to forsaking them for the only true Savior, Jesus Christ. If you have already placed your faith in Christ but are still ensnared by the world's inadequate solutions to your need for acceptance, jettison the world's "old wineskins," which never worked, for the perfect resolution to all our needs, Jesus Christ.

2. THE RULER'S DAUGHTER

■ **MATTHEW 9:18–19, 23–26**

Q: *How did Matthew refer to the man who approached Jesus?*

Q: *What drove this man to Jesus?*

Matthew referred to the man who approached Jesus on this occasion simply as a "ruler." We know from Mark 5:22 and Luke 8:41 that he was a ruler of the Synagogue named Jairus, but Matthew omitted this detail to make the figure more generic. We do not know from Matthew if he was a Synagogue ruler, a high-ranking Roman soldier, part of the Jewish ruling elite, part of the Roman governor's operation, or anything beyond the fact that he was a ruler. But as a ruler, he was part of the elite, who had little to do with Jesus. They were untouched by many of the difficulties facing the common man and not given to the sensationalism that often surrounded Him. But this ruler had an urgent need, one he knew he could not meet on his own. His daughter was dead, but he knew she had much more life to live. He decided to go to Jesus and throw his need at Jesus's feet. He had run out of options. He knew his notoriety and prestige could not save his daughter.

Q: *How did you come to see your need for Jesus?*

Q: *How can you show the elite in your community their need for Jesus?*

APPLICATION POINT – Just as in Jesus’s day, the elite of our society seldom see their need for Jesus. They can afford all that money can buy. They have easy access to the best healthcare. They can shelter themselves from many of life’s hardships that could otherwise help them see their need for something beyond themselves. In our culture, this actually describes a great number of people, perhaps yourself and many of your friends. Wealth and status can often keep people from seeing their need for Jesus, but there will come a point when these things fail, just as they did for the ruler in this passage. And in these moments, they will be most able to see their need for Jesus. When that point comes, Christians need to be ready to sensitively speak up for the hope they can have in Christ Jesus. Listen this week to your coworkers and acquaintances. Are they at a point of being able to see their need for Christ if you share with them? If so, commit to taking that opportunity, because you do not know how often their need for Christ will be so obvious to them.

Q: *What was the crowd doing when Jesus arrived at the ruler’s house?*

Q: *How did they respond to Jesus’s claim that the girl was only sleeping?*

Mourning is a natural reaction to loss, especially the death of family and friends. It is not surprising that a crowd of mourners had gathered outside of the ruler’s house. What was surprising was Jesus’s assertion that the girl was merely asleep. Didn’t He know that others had verified the girl was dead? Or was he daring to suggest the girl’s death was no more permanent than an afternoon nap? Whatever the case, Jesus’s statement provided momentary comic relief for the crowd. Had they known who Jesus was and what He was there to do, the relief would not have been momentary or comic. It would have been death-defeating, sin-conquering, eternal-life-giving relief. The crowd displayed an “old wineskin” reaction. Reaching out to her with only a helping hand, Jesus raised the girl from death to life. We are left to imagine the father’s grief turned to joy and the crowd’s laughter turned to awe. Jesus’s power over death is a clear indication that a major shift was taking place. While all humanity will taste death, death is not the final word! This is “new wine,” and it can only be accepted by “new wineskins.”

Q: *How is Christian grief different from the grief of lost sinners?*

Q: *How should Christians face death differently than non-Christians?*

APPLICATION POINT – Non-believers exhibit a wide range of responses to death. Some weep almost inconsolably, others act as if death is of minimal significance. These responses, and everything in between, are merely worldly attempts to cope with the reality of death. Beyond coping, the reality is that in their minds death has the final say for non-believers, and that finality is something the human conscience was not created to bear. As Christians, our grief should be a model to an unbelieving world that death does not have the last word. We believe all will one day rise again, and those who have placed their faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins will live with Him for eternity, and everyone else will suffer eternal punishment apart from Christ. This week prepare your heart as a believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ to face the death of those you are close to. This is a tremendous testimony for unbelievers.

3. BLIND MEN AND THE DEMON POSSESSED MAN

■ MATTHEW 9:27-34

Q: *How were the blind men healed?*

Q: *What did the crowds say after Jesus healed the demon-possessed man?*

After Jesus raised the ruler's daughter, Matthew included two healing stories. In the first, Jesus healed two blind men. He seemed to ignore them at first, which seems rather harsh, but His words brought His actions into greater light. When the blind men affirmed their belief that Jesus could heal them, their words were supported by their actions. They had followed Jesus down the road and into the house, which would have been very hard with their disability. There could be no doubt of their belief that Jesus was able to heal them.

The demon-possessed man also suffered from an impairment of the senses. He was not able to speak, even of his belief in Jesus's power to save. After Jesus drove out the demon, however, he spoke. Jesus was able to restore the faculties of these men, which at that time was extraordinary. Once a person's physical faculties left them, they could not rely on medicine to restore them. The crowd's response verified the unique nature of Jesus's ministry. No one had ever done this type of thing before. Their confession distinguished Jesus from all such prophetic activity in Israel's past. The prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha, had worked miracles, but nothing compared to Jesus's ability to restore the human condition.

Q: *In what ways do you need Jesus's restorative work in your life?*

Q: *Do your daily habits affirm that Jesus is able to work in your life? Does the way you respond to problems show that you believe Jesus can work in any situation or do you believe you have to come up with the solutions to all your problems?*

APPLICATION – Jesus is not limited to addressing the physical limitations we encounter. He can also address the emotional and relational issues that occur and reoccur in our lives. We live in a society of unbelievable prosperity. Modern medicine has made tremendous advances. Yet, with all this affluence, our relationships with family members and friends appear to be in more turmoil than ever. Marriages are constantly ending in divorce. Relationships between children and parents or between siblings are often strained. Jesus can heal these relationships just as He restored sight to the blind and speech to the mute. If there are broken relationships in your life, allow Jesus to restore them with the gospel. The gospel teaches that none of us is perfect, neither you nor the person you are at odds with. You have a common need for Jesus to work in your lives. In fact, this is the basis for any flourishing relationship, whether it be your marriage or your relationship with family. Christ makes all the difference, just as He did for the blind and the demon possessed. Seek restoration for the broken relationships in your life through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Q: *What did Jesus say to the blind men after they were healed?*

Q: *What was the Pharisees' response to Jesus healing the demon-possessed man?*

Upon hearing of Jesus's ministry of healing, the Pharisees rejected the implications of the healings and instead claimed He was an agent of demons. As Jesus noted elsewhere (Matthew 12:24–28), this claim was preposterous. The real issue was that the Pharisees could not accept Jesus's ministry. They were "old wineskins," unable to hold the "new wine" Jesus's ministry implied.

This concern likely explains Jesus's prohibition on the two blind men. His command to keep quiet can initially be confusing. Why would Jesus want to keep them from telling others about Him? The most likely reason is that telling

the masses would have been akin to filling old wineskins with new wine. The Pharisees would counter their message by saying, “He heals by the prince of demons.” They would call into question the faith that healed these men. Jesus was warning these men that their message would not be received by those who lacked the faith they had.

This is a hard teaching for evangelistic, missional-minded Christians to accept, but it is pervasive throughout Scripture. In Ezekiel 15, the prophet addressed Jewish exiles who were intensely hopeful that Jerusalem, the Judean political and religious capital, would persevere through the Babylonian conquest. Ezekiel, however, said their hopes were unfounded. Jerusalem was like a vine on a tree. The vine is good for neither lumber nor fire. The city could not sustain and would not uphold the hope the exiles had placed on it. The city was an “old wineskin.” It could not hold the mercy of God. Jesus gave a similar teaching in Matthew 7:6, which states, “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.” Dogs have no appreciation for sacred things. Pigs are unconcerned with precious ornaments. Those whose hearts are committed to unbelief have no place for the gospel we hold so dear. In a similar vein, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

❖: *How can you judge between a persistent, faithful witness (Luke 18:1-8) and a wise stewardship of the time you have for a prophetic witness to the world?*

❖: *How do you see unbelief at work in your community, both locally and nationally?*

APPLICATION POINT – As you consider whether to be persistent in evangelism or whether you are dealing with old wineskins, you must begin by considering your own faithfulness to share your faith. If you rarely share your faith, you should not excuse faithlessness by arguing that you are surrounded by people who will never believe. God has called us to be faithful witnesses. Jesus’s message about old wineskins and the Pharisees is about being a good steward with your witness. If you are not sharing your faith at all, you are not being a good steward. If you are faithfully sharing but continue encountering people who reject the gospel, you need to consider whether you are dealing with people who are simply refusing to believe and, if so, whether you could better steward your witness for Jesus by sharing with others. This is a challenging question because there are certainly instances in which we need to persist even though the person we are sharing with is refusing to believe. There is no single set of guidelines, but perhaps you should commit to persisting with family and those you are obligated to be around, such as your coworkers. Jesus said the harvest is plentiful (Matthew 9:37). If you are not seeing much of a harvest, it may be worth considering whether you are trying to harvest a field of people who are refusing to believe (Matthew 10:17).



NEXT STEPS

Jesus's ministry inaugurated a new age in history, but not everyone can accept the changes His ministry, death, and resurrection entail. Sometimes that even includes His followers! This week keep an eye out for "old wineskins," both within your own thinking and in those you regularly interact with. When you encounter these vestiges of holding on to a world without Jesus, confront them with the gospel.

PRAY

+Use these prayer points to instill the lessons you learned from God's Word this week.

God, continually prepare my heart to be shaped by your will instead of the expectations of my culture.

Lord Jesus, help me to believe in your ministry and in your work. You have made all the difference, both in the world and in my life.

Father, help me to engage "old wineskins." May the life-changing power of your gospel be let loose throughout this world.

