

Christ's Ministry – Fulfilled Prophecy

In Matthew 8:16, we find that Jesus cast out demons and HEALED EVERYONE that was brought to Him. But this was not done in a vacuum. It had a very prophetic purpose.

Matthew 8:17 (NKJV)

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.”

This is an interesting statement that has stimulated lots of discussion. Matthew here connects Christ's healing ministry to the atonement passage of Isaiah 53. For this reason, Charismatic and Pentecostal teachers have argued that healing for all believers is immediately available in the atoning work of Christ on the cross. However, this is only partially right – meaning it is wrong.

We have to back up and see the greater context of what Matthew is saying. Matthew speaks from a BIG PICTURE perspective. Realize that at the time of Christ's earthly healing ministry, the cross was still future.

Isaiah 53:4 (NKJV)

4 Surely He has borne our griefs [Lit “*sicknesses*’] And carried our sorrows [Lit “*pains*”]; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.

Matthew is presenting the ministry of Christ, which gives a preview of the coming kingdom healing, which ultimately is based on the atoning cross-work of Christ presented in Isaiah 53. Thus, ultimately, Matthew sees the fulfillment of kingdom healing as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53.

The BIG PICTURE view is that the preview of kingdom healing evidenced by Christ in His earthly ministry anticipated His atoning work on the cross. All healing is ultimately based on the atoning work of Christ as spelled out in Isaiah 53.

In the kingdom, the effects and consequences of sin will be removed – largely in the millennial kingdom, and then completely in the eternal state.

Matthew, in his kingdom emphasis, anticipates this coming kingdom reality as being fulfilled on the basis of Christ's atonement. But again, Christ's healing ministry was merely a foretaste and a preview of the ultimate kingdom fulfillment which is yet future. Thus, in Christ's earthly ministry, it was “fulfilled” in a partial sense - in the sense of anticipation.

But correct theology notes that while complete healing is ultimately in the atonement, we are not experiencing that yet today. That reality will be fully realized in the kingdom, and we are not there yet. We have a sampling of it in Christ's ministry, but the complete fulfillment of it is yet future.

Today, we partake of the spiritual aspects of healing provided for in the atonement, but not yet in all the physical aspects. In other words, these bodies we live in are still prone to sickness and death. Peter emphasized the spiritual realization we know now in 1 Peter 2:24.

1 Peter 2:24 (NKJV)

24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

Peter, quoting from the same context of Isaiah 53 in verse 5, makes application to our spiritual lives, not physical healing. Peter emphasizes Christ's dying for our sins and the resulting spiritual healing. That is where we are today. As believers, we have been reconciled to God spiritually on the basis of Christ's cross work (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

However, the completion of what Christ has accomplished for us – that is, complete physical healing awaits the rapture/resurrection.

Romans 8:22–23 (NKJV)

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the **FORMER THINGS** have passed away." (EMPHASIS MINE)

In the kingdom, the things that will be "*former*" are now present. We still have death, sorrow, crying, and pain, but in the full realization of the kingdom, these things will be past – they will be former things never to be experienced again. But that is not where we live now. Right now, we still groan as we await the redemption of the body.

The kingdom is coming, but it is not here yet. Paul sarcastically said to the errant Corinthians, “*You have reigned as kings without us- and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!*” (1 Cor. 4:8) The Corinthians had an errant “**kingdom theology**” claiming they were already experiencing kingdom realities when they were not.

“From the perspective of the NT writers, the Cross is the basis for all the benefits that accrue to believers; but this does not mean that all such benefits can be secured at the present time on demand, any more than we have the right and power to demand our resurrection bodies. The availability of any specific blessing can be determined only by appealing to the overall teaching of Scripture.” – **D.A. Carson**

Matthew 8-9 presents a series of miracles presented in 3 groupings as seen in Matthew 8:1-17; 8:23-9:8; and 9:18-33a). Each grouping of miracles is followed by a reaction indicating either what is or what is not the appropriate response to Christ’s authority as Lord (cf. Mt. 8:18-22; 9:9-17; 9:33b – 34). The issue throughout is Christ’s kingdom Authority as King and the response to it.

In Matthew 8:1-17, we have seen the kingdom authority of Jesus on display, which evoked an emotional response among the masses. But as Lord, Jesus demands that His people be followers who truly recognize and submit to His authority.