

## **Matthew 9:1-8**

Fr. Andrew's Bible Study notes for Matthew 9:1-8.

### **Matthew CHAPTER 9a**

**<sup>1</sup>And He embarked into the ship, and went across, and came into His own city.**

Chrysostom: "By His own city here he means Capernaum. For that which gave Him birth was Bethlehem; that which brought Him up, Nazareth; that which had Him continually inhabiting it, Capernaum."

**<sup>2</sup>And behold, they were bringing to Him a paralytic who was laid on a couch. And Jesus, having seen their faith, said to the paralytic, "Be of good courage, child; thy sins have been forgiven thee."**

#### **Personal Faith is not always required for a miracle**

Chrysostom: "For He does not on all occasions require faith on the part of the sick only: as for instance, when they are insane, or in any other way, through their disease, are out of their own control. Or rather, in this case the sick man too had part in the faith; for he would not have suffered himself to be let down, unless he had believed."

#### **The authority of Christ to forgive sins**

Chrysostom: "Forasmuch then as they had evinced so great faith, He also evinces His own power, with all authority absolving his sins, and signifying in all ways that He is equal in honor with Him that begot Him."

**<sup>3</sup>And behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, "This *One* blasphemeth."**

**<sup>4</sup>And Jesus, having perceived their thoughts, said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?"**

#### **Knowledge of inner thoughts**

Chrysostom: "In this case indeed He discloses also another sign, and that no small one, of His own Godhead, and of His equality in honor with the Father...He makes another kind of display in a thing which pertained to God only; the publishing the secrets in the heart. For neither had they uttered what they were thinking...But that it belongs to God only to know men's secrets, hear what says the prophet, "You most entirely alone know the hearts;" (2 Chronicles 6:30) and again, "God tries the hearts and reins;" and Jeremiah too says, "The heart is deep above all things, and it is man, and who shall know him?" and, "Man shall look on the face, but God on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7) And by many things one may see, that to know what is in the mind belongs to God alone."

**<sup>5</sup>"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and be walking'?"**

### **Jesus has come to take away the sins of the world (spiritual wellness is greater than physical)**

Chrysostom: "Now what He says is like this, "Which seems to you easier, to bind up a disorganized body, or to undo the sins of a soul? It is quite manifest; to bind up a body. For by how much a soul is better than a body, by so much is the doing away sins a greater work than this; but because the one is unseen, the other in sight, I throw in that, which although an inferior thing, is yet more open to sense; that the greater also and the unseen may thereby receive its proof;" thus by His works anticipating even now the revelation of what had been said by John, that "He takes away the sins of the world."

**<sup>6</sup>"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins"—then said He to the paralytic, "Arise and take up your couch, and go to your house."**

"Son of Man" was a cryptic expression of the Messiah which was known only to the religious leaders as the one foretold by Daniel.

"13. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed."

**<sup>7</sup>And he arose and went away to his house. <sup>8</sup>And after the crowds saw *it*, they marvelled and glorified God, Who gave such authority to men.**

### **How God looks upon blasphemers**

Chrysostom: "For even the God of all, having power to launch His thunderbolt against them that blaspheme Him, makes the sun to rise, and sends forth the showers, and affords them all other things in abundance; whom we ought to imitate, and so to entreat, advise, admonish, with meekness, not angry, not making ourselves wild beasts. For no harm at all ensues unto God by their blasphemy, that you should be angered, but he who blasphemed has himself also received the wound. Wherefore groan, bewail, for the calamity indeed deserves tears. And the wounded man, again—nothing can so heal him as gentleness: gentleness, I say, which is mightier than any force."

### **How to treat enemies of the Truth**

Chrysostom: "Accordingly, when you see an enemy of the truth, wait on him, take care of him, lead him back into virtue, by showing forth an excellent life, by applying "speech that cannot be condemned," (Titus 2:8) by bestowing attention and tender care, by trying every means of amendment, in imitation of the best physicians. For neither do they cure in one manner only, but when they see the wound not yield to the first

remedy, they add another, and after that again another; and now they use the knife, and now bind up. And do you accordingly, having become a physician of souls, put in practice every mode of cure according to Christ's laws; that you may receive the reward both of saving yourself and of profiting others, doing all to the glory of God, and so being glorified also yourself. "For them that glorify me," says He, "I will glorify; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed."

### **Matthew 9:9-13**

Fr. Andrew's Bible Study notes on Matthew 9:9-13.

### **Matthew CHAPTER 9:9-13**

(Biblical Text: The Orthodox New Testament, Holy Apostles Convent, CO)

**<sup>9</sup>And as Jesus passed by from that place, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the custom-house.**

"Sitting at the custom-house" (ejpi; to; telwvnon). The tax-office or custom-house was a toll booth. "Sitting at," is literally, "sitting on," that is, the elevated platform or bench which was the principal feature of the toll-office. The publicans (*telonai*) derive their name in many English translations from the Latin *publicanus* (a man in public duty), but that is not an accurate job description in this case. The tax collectors were generally detested because they practiced graft.

**"Matthew the Tax Collector:** Matthew was a publican who had his customs office not far from Capernaum on the road from Damascus to Acre, where he could examine the goods of travelers along this highway, and could collect the required taxes. Holding this office he had of necessity to violate the Pharisaical Sabbath observances, and would therefore cause wrath to be upon him. ([www.bible-history.com](http://www.bible-history.com))

### **The conversion of Mattew – by word alone**

**And He saith to him, "Follow thou Me." And he rose up and followed Him.**

"(He called Matthew) ...when He knew he would obey. That Matthew converted by word alone is the work of God." (Blessed Theophylact, Matt 9:9)."

### **The extraordinary sudden departure reflects his readiness**

"Matthew also He then called when He was assured he would respond to Him... Because He who is acquainted with the hearts, and knows the secrets of each man's mind, knew also when each of these would obey. Therefore not at the beginning did He call him (St. Paul), when he was yet in rather a hardened state, but after His countless miracles, and the great fame concerning Him, when He knew him to have actually become more prepared for obedience. And we have cause also to admire the self-denial of the evangelist, how he disguises not his own former life, but adds even his name, when the others had concealed him under another appellation. (Chrysostom, homily 30:1)."

“But why did he say he was sitting at the receipt of customs? To indicate the power of Him that called him, that it was not when he had left off or forsaken this wicked trade, but from the midst of the evils He drew him up (Chrysostom, homily 30:1).”

<sup>10</sup>**And it came to pass, as He reclined *at table* in the house, also behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining *at table* with Jesus and His disciples.**

### **Soul Conversion**

“Having therefore called him, He also honored him with a very great honor by partaking straightway of his table; for in this way He would both give him good hope for the future, and lead him on to a greater confidence. For not in a long time, **but at once, He healed his vice.** (Chrysostom, homily 30:1)”

Saint Neophytos the Recluse: “And when, I said, will I who am defiled by many sins become worthy? And he said to me: How many days did the woman fallen in many sins need to be cleansed? How many days did the Prodigal require? How many the thief? How many the Tax-Collector? Did not each of these find salvation in the twinkling of an eye? Yes, I said, but they saw the Lord with their own eyes and were granted immediate remission of their sins. And do you not believe that even now Christ accepts and purifies and sympathizes with penitents no less, even if he is not seen with our own eyes? And even though we do not see him on account of the fog of our passions, nevertheless he see us and either shows mercy on account of our penitance or turns away on account of our sin.”

<sup>11</sup>**And after the Pharisees saw *Him*, they said to His disciples, “Why eat your Teacher with the tax collectors and sinners?”** <sup>12</sup>**And Jesus, having heard *it*, said to them, “They who are strong have no need of a physician, but they who are ill.**

### **Jesus taught that the *spirit of the Law* was more important than the letter**

“See how He turned their reasoning to the opposite conclusion. That is, while they made it a charge against Him that He was in company with these men: He on the contrary says, that His not being with them would be unworthy of Him, and of His love of man; and that to amend such persons is not only blameless, but excellent, and necessary, and deserving of all sorts of praise (Chrysostom, homily 30:1)”.

“The preference for being condemned by God for leniency towards the penitent rather than to be praised by God for ‘lack of sympathy’, i.e. for rigour, reminds us of a similar saying by the contemporary saint of our Church, Justin Popovitch, that he also formulated in a provocative manner: ‘To preserve the holy canons I am ready to sacrifice my life, but at the same time to save one person I am ready to sacrifice all the holy canons.’ (‘The Pluralism of the Church’s Canonical Tradition’ by Theodoros Yankos, Professor of Canon Law at the Aristotelian University of Thessalonica).”

<sup>13</sup>**“But go and learn what *this* is, ‘I wish mercy, and not sacrifice’: For I came not to call *the* righteous, but sinners to repentance.”**

“Now this He said, to upbraid them with their ignorance of the Scriptures. Wherefore also He orders His discourse more sharply, not Himself in anger, far from it; but so as that the publicans might not be in utter perplexity...The fact is, He is signifying hereby that not He was transgressing the law, but they; as if He had said, Wherefore accuse me? Because I bring sinners to amendment? Why then you must accuse the Father also for this. Much as He said also elsewhere, establishing this point: My Father works hitherto, and I work: John 5:17 so here again, Go ye and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. For as this is His will, says Christ, so also mine. Do you see how the one is superfluous, the other necessary? For neither did He say, I will have mercy, and sacrifice, but, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. That is, the one thing He allowed, the other He cast out; and proved that what they blamed, so far from being forbidden, was even ordained by the law, and more so than sacrifice; and He brings in the Old Testament, speaking words and ordaining laws in harmony with Himself (Chrysostom, homily 30:1).”

### **Matthew 9:14-17**

Father Andrew's Bible Study notes on Matthew 9:14-17.

### **Matthew CHAPTER 9:14-17**

(The Orthodox New Testament Translation, Holy Apostles Convent, CO)

**<sup>14</sup>Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but Your disciples fast not?”**

### **The disciples of John the Baptist were jealous of Jesus’s disciples**

Saint Chrysostom: “John’s disciples were ever jealously disposed towards Christ Himself and Christ’s disciples, since they saw them baptizing. They began to reason with those who were baptized, as if their baptism had more than that of Christ’s disciples. They took one of the baptized, and endeavored to persuade him of this, but they did not persuade him. Hear how the evangelist gives us to understand that they were the first to attack Him, not He Who set on foot the question. He does not say that ‘a certain Jew questioned them,’ but that ‘there arose an inquiry from the disciples of John with a Jew about purification.’” [Hom. 29, P.G. 59:165, 166 (col. 168).]

### **Fasting without virtue is dead**

“For of what use is fasting, when the mind is full of wickedness; when you blame others, when you condemn them, bearing about beams in your eyes, and do all for display? No, before all this you ought to have cast out vainglory, to be proficient in all the other duties, in charity, meekness, brotherly love (Chrysostom, Homily 30 on Matthew).”

**<sup>15</sup>And Jesus said to them, “The sons of the bridechamber are not able to mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, are they?”**

“So the point we want to see here is that Jesus is identifying himself as the Bridegroom.

And he says, "If I am the Bridegroom and the disciples are with me, well, they're going to rejoice with me. But then the day is going to come when the Bridegroom is going to be taken away, and when the Bridegroom is taken away, then they will definitely fast." And, of course, Christians do fast, because our Bridegroom, Jesus, has been taken away, but we're waiting for him to return again. (Hopko, *Names of Jesus: Jesus the Bridegroom*, Ancient Faith Radio)

**John considers himself the one who *leads in the bridegroom* -**

<sup>29</sup>"The *one* who hath the bride is *the* bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy then, which is mine, has been made full. [Jn. 3:29]

**Christ is the Bridegroom & the People of God are His Bride**

Saint Bede: "The Bridegroom is Christ, the bride is the Church, and the friends of the Bridegroom, or of the marriage, are each of His faithful. The time of the marriage is that time when, through the mystery of the Incarnation, He joined holy Church to Himself. It was not by chance, but for the sake of a certain mystical meaning, that He came to a marriage celebrated on earth in the customary fleshly way, since He descended from heaven to earth in order to connect the Church to Himself in spiritual love. His nuptial chamber was the womb of His incorrupt Mother, where God was joined with human nature, and from there He came forth like a bridegroom to join the Church to Himself."

**The Bridal Chamber is the Kingdom of Heaven – salvation is to be wed forever to Christ**

Saint Gregory the Great: "How the blessed will rejoice in their recompense! They are the blessed who are vouchsafed to enjoy that vision of Him, in Whose presence the elements tremble; and they will go in with Him to the marriage. At the same time, as they rejoice in the nuptials of the Bridegroom, they themselves will be the bride: for, in the bridal chamber of the everlasting kingdom, they are united forever to their God. Thenceforth that vision can never be snatched from their possession."

**The Bride of Christ are sinners in need of salvation**

"Who is the wife, the bride of the Son of God who is the Bridegroom and the Husband? Who is that wife? Well, we know already, very well. The prophets tell us: it's adulterous Israel. It's harlot humanity. It's all the human race of the Israel and the Gentiles who worship false gods and do not worship the one, true, and living God who is their husband and loves them like a husband and has chosen them as a bride to love and ravish with beauty and glory and splendor and joy forever and ever and ever. That bride is symbolized by the Samaritan woman, a heretic, a Gentile, a woman, a sinful woman, a prostitute-type woman, a harlot-type woman—that is the bride of Christ. He came for the sinners, and we are those sinners. And that's why he's called the Bridegroom, and that's why we are his bride. (Hopko, *The Names of Jesus: Jesus the Bridegroom*, Ancient Faith Radio)

**The Bridal Chamber** - Christ as the Bridegroom and the Bridal Chamber is one of PASSION. Why? The services of the Bridegroom express the fullness and the completeness of Love. Christ and our Soul: Christ and the Church are our Marriage with God. "Through the Cross it is made possible for us to be wedded with Christ." (Archbishop Demetrios.)

**But days will come, whenever the bridegroom shall have been taken away from them, and then shall they fast.**

"He signifies that what they did was not of gluttony but pertained to some marvelous dispensation. And at the same time He lays beforehand the foundation of what He was to say **touching His passion**, in His controversies with others instructing His disciples, and training them now to be versed in the things which are deemed sorrowful (Chrysostom, Homily 30 on Matthew)."

<sup>16</sup>"**Now no one puts a patch of un-shrunk cloth on an old garment; for that which is put in to fill it takes away from the garment, and a worse tear takes place.** <sup>17</sup>"**Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine is poured out, and the wineskins will be destroyed. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.**" [Mt. 9:14-17]

#### **God takes us up one step at a time**

"The disciples, he says, have not yet become strong, and therefore require forbearance (synkatabasis = to lower oneself together with another, considerateness, iokonomia). The heavy burden of commandments ought not to be laid upon them. Jesus also said these things to teach the disciples that later, when they would go out into all the world to make disciples, they too should use forbearance. (Theophylact, Gospel of Matthew Chpt. 9)