

## A NEW CREATION!

Mk. 1:40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. <sup>41</sup> And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth [his] hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. <sup>42</sup> And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. <sup>43</sup> And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; <sup>44</sup> And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. <sup>45</sup> But he went out, and began to publish [it] much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

Previously, in Capernaum, after having healed the mother-in-law of Simon, many sick and demon-possessed came to Jesus from the surrounding area to be healed. Afterwards He preached (κηρύσσω, heralded, proclaimed) in the many synagogues throughout Galilee the same message He preached in Nazareth and in Capernaum, cf. Lk. 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, <sup>19</sup> To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Mark specifically mentioned how, during this opening period, He cast out devils (1:39). The purpose behind the healings and miracles of Jesus was to present Himself as the Son of God. He cast out demons to show He has the power over the whole kingdom of darkness, and there is nothing that can hinder His purposes. And since He could carry out such compelling miracles, then He can be trusted to teach honestly Divine truth.

So, Jesus was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom which is the good news of salvation, forgiveness and eternal life. He was healing the sick and driving out demons. The amount of work He did far surpassed all the Gospel records about Him. In fact, that is the point John made, 21:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: <sup>31</sup> But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Let's go a little further even ... Illness and demon possession in the land of Israel during the time of Christ's three-and-a-half year ministry would have been at an all-time low! ... And let's consider what that means for the future ... When Jesus returns to this earth and establishes His Kingdom, what He did in the region of Galilee and Judea will be multiplied many times over, throughout the world. Please turn to Is. 65:19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: ... And let's for a moment qualify that statement by understanding it in its correct context, Is. 62:1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp [that] burneth. <sup>2</sup> And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory. ...

In other words, the Jerusalem being referred to is not the Church, for some say the Church has taken over and eclipsed the people of Israel, but it clearly hasn't because the distinction is made between Jerusalem, - which represents the Jews, - and the Gentiles ... Let's continue with Is. 65:19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. <sup>20</sup> There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner [*being*] an hundred years old shall be accursed ... <sup>23</sup> They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they [*are*] the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. ... Mal. 4:1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. <sup>2</sup> But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. ... This is how it will be when Jesus returns! There will be an unequalled display of His Divine Power ... and the Gospels give us a little 'taster' of this when Jesus healed the sick and drove out the demons when He first came.

The people never denied His miracles, and never denied His power. ... It was the religious leaders who came up with the accusation His power came from the devil, and not from God ... and then the people started to think along those lines too and they ended up condemning themselves because they rejected Christ as their Messiah. ... But here in Mk. 1:40-45 is another man who was rejected, - through no fault of his own, - because he was a leper.

The passage that Mark relates is also covered by Matthew and Luke, and is one of two occasions in the four Gospels where Jesus healed a leper ... Mt. 8:1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. <sup>2</sup> And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. <sup>3</sup> And Jesus put forth [*his*] hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. <sup>4</sup> And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them ... Lk. 5:12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on [*his*] face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. <sup>13</sup> And he put forth [*his*] hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. <sup>14</sup> And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. <sup>15</sup> But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. <sup>16</sup> And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Mark records, Mk. 1:40 And there came a leper to him [*Jesus*] ... Imagine if your son or daughter came home and told you they had AIDS, and they had contacted it through a particular sinful lifestyle. You would be distraught.

Well, consider someone who lived in the ancient Jewish community and they discovered they had this disease of leprosy. They noticed their skin was turning scaly skin ... and on closer examination their worst fears were realised! They were unclean, and they had to leave their society and exile themselves from their friends and families ... and away from the community in which they had been brought up. This man knew he was unclean, because He asked Jesus to make him “clean” (v.40).

According to Lev. 13, when they came to where people were gathered, they had to debase themselves by shouting out “Unclean, Unclean”. They had to draw attention to their condition. Consider how they must have felt! They had to tear their clothes so that ordinary decent people were under no doubt as to *what* they were ... They were no longer counted as people, they were polluted!

They kept within their own communities because, after all, who else would have them! Nobody wanted them! Later in His ministry Jesus met ten lepers. They would have eaten together, slept together, spent all day and all night together ... because that is all there was for them.

It began when they or their families noticed some kind of a skin disorder and they were sent to the priest. He would examine them based on the tests in the fifty-nine verses of Lev. 13, for example, Lev. 13:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, <sup>2</sup> When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh [*like*] the plague of leprosy; then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests: <sup>3</sup> And the priest shall look on the plague in the skin of the flesh: and [*when*] the hair in the plague is turned white, and the plague in sight [*be*] deeper than the skin of his flesh, it [*is*] a plague of leprosy: and the priest shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean. These were very stringent tests ... but, of course, for the sake of the community, they had to be! It was a highly contagious disease, and Lev. 13 is quite detailed as to how to diagnose it. It must have been so shattering, look at v.44 and try to imagine the devastating analysis, He is a leprous man, he [*is*] unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean; his plague [*is*] in his head. <sup>45</sup> And the leper in whom the plague [*is*], his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. <sup>46</sup> All the days wherein the plague [*shall be*] in him he shall be defiled; he [*is*] unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp [*shall*] his habitation [*be*].

Leprosy usually starts with a whiter pink patch of skin, usually on the brow, on the nose, on the ear, the cheek, the chin. The patch begins to spread in all directions. And one of the early signs is the eyebrows and eyelashes disappear.

Then spongy tumorous swelling grows on the face and on the body. The disease becomes systemic by invading the internal organs as well as the skin. Fingers and toes are so badly affected because the bacteria invading the bone marrow impairs the blood supply, and causes the bones to shrivel. And because of the loss of feeling, - because of the terrible nerve damage, - the victim then destroys their own tissue because they have no feeling. The leprosy can destroy their eyes, and cause blindness. It can penetrate the teeth so the teeth fall out. It can do this all over the body, - it continues to be such a terrible disease, even today ... but away back in Jesus' time there was no cure for it ... and no hope. ... And even if someone *did* manage to escape the disease, they would have to live with the damage leprosy had already done to them.

Imagine having to go everywhere shouting, "Unclean! Unclean!" Through no fault of their own, society condemned them. They couldn't go to the temple. They couldn't go to the synagogue. They couldn't sit with the men in the market place. They couldn't associate with their family. They were isolated, a pariah, and a nobody!

Dr. Luke actually diagnosed this man as being full [πλήρης] of leprosy (5:12), - the man was the picture of living death. And even the fact he came to Jesus was forbidden, - the man had to stay away from company for he was an outcast! He wasn't allowed into a synagogue ... he would not have been there in the congregation in Nazareth or Capernaum, for he would not have been allowed in! Religion wasn't for such people! ... And yet, here was a leper who came to Jesus. ... Yes, this leper *did* come to Jesus! ... This meant he could have been in serious trouble for violating the regulations concerning his exclusion ... but why? He did what he did because he was so desperate!

He came to Jesus beseeking him ... and the word means he *ran* to Jesus, and he fell down on his knees and cried out in heartache and anguish, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. He needed to speak with Jesus, and for Jesus to heal him. Jesus was his only hope! ... And he fell on his knees in the same way a servant would come before a king ... Matthew says, there came a leper and worshipped [προσκυνέω, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence] him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean (Mt. 8:2). Luke says, 5:12 [He] fell on [his] face, and besought [δέομαι]him [Jesus], saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. ... He not only went down on his knees, but he also went down on his face. He humbly petitioned the Saviour and acknowledged Him by faith as the Great Physician.

Luke tells us he called Jesus, “Lord” (κύριος, 5:12). He was confident, - when others were apprehensive, - to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. He had no doubts as to the Saviour’s power. The only thing he was unsure of was whether or not Jesus would stoop to heal a man like him.

He came to Jesus knowing the kind of a person he was. He might have had a good job before he took leprosy ... He might have been an upstanding citizen in the community ... but now he knew he was an outcast, and he knew how everyone looked down on him ... and even, how he despised himself. As far as ordinary people were concerned, he was held in contempt because he was a leper ... and as far as the law was concerned, he was cursed. So, he came to Jesus, kneeling before him, falling with his face to the ground, in the hope that Jesus would heal him. Poor and wretched, - inside and out, - he knew well he was a sinner ... and he knew only a Saviour could save him. ... And he pleads for the cleansing he needed.

Notice he didn’t ask for healing, but for cleansing. He was prepared to live with the consequences of his leprosy because he never considered the damage the disease had done to him could be reversed or healed. ... Scripture often speaks about lepers being cleansed, not healed. In fact, the defilement of being a leper was far worse than actually having the disease. For example, it seems that Simon the Leper (Mt. 26:6-13 and Mk. 14:3-9) was no longer a ‘leper’, in that he no longer suffered from the disease, but the stigma of the name had ‘stuck’ with him. That was how people knew him ... not just “Simon”, but by the derogatory label, “Simon the Leper”. ... So, the leper in Mk 1:40ff., - who was ‘full of leprosy’ (Lk. 5:12) wanted cleansing ... sufficient to be accepted into society once again.

Already we have seen how Jesus healed in great numbers ... and many of the people, - the great majority of them, - would not have believed in him as the Messiah ... a great person, maybe even a prophet ... but not necessarily the Messiah. They simply came to Him to be healed ... and went away again restored, but with no actual spiritual change. This man, though, touched the heart of the Saviour because [moved with compassion](#), Jesus felt the man’s pain, and the agony of his isolation, and his physical distress.

This is the heart of God. [He knoweth our frame](#) (Ps. 103:14). He knows more about us than we know about ourselves! He even knows more about the extremities of our sin than we know! Jesus was [moved with compassion](#) ... the same compassion that brought Him to die on the cross for His people.

Now, in Lev.5:3 it is forbidden to touch anyone who is unclean ... why? Because if you touched an unclean person you could be infected, and it automatically made you unclean. However, *Jesus* could not be defiled by anyone. There is no record anywhere in Scripture of Him having any illness or disease. Jesus reached out His hand and *touched* this leper, - I wouldn't have done it, and you wouldn't have done it! But Jesus did it, and He didn't catch leprosy ... He never even caught a cold! ... He touched the leper. He identified with the man's need, - He came down to his level when the man could not get up to His.

Once again, think about that ... *where* was the man? He had come to Jesus, and then he knelt before Him ... and Luke tells us he fell on his face on the ground, and that is where the man was ... on his face on the dusty ground in front of Jesus. Then we read, *Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth [his] hand, and touched him.* How did Jesus do that? How was Jesus able to touch him? In order for Jesus to touch Him, He knelt down to where the man was. The Saviour's knees were on the dusty ground beside the leper. When everyone else had drawn their distance, Jesus, - the King of Glory, the Son of God, - *made himself of no reputation* and knelt beside that sinner with the dreadful disease of leprosy. ... That is grace! That is *sovereign* grace!

The leper said, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean ...* and Jesus replied, *I will; be thou clean.* And what a life-changing moment it was for this man! Jesus came to that place for him that day ... and *as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed ... immediately!* At the very moment, - instantaneously and completely, - the leprosy left the man, he was healed, and he was cleansed! ... No gimmicks, no 'wait to we see', no process, and no explanation ... *as soon as [Jesus] had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. ... There is the power of our Saviour!*

Not only was the leper healed of his leprosy, but all the damage it had done, - and remember how he was '*full of leprosy*' (Lk. 5:12), - ... it had all gone, and his skin was as brand new! If his face had been disfigured, it was healed completely. If the leprosy had affected his eyesight, or had even made him blind ... it was perfect again. If it had eaten away at any of his limbs, they were restored as new ... and it all happened *immediately*. One moment he was a leper, the next moment he was perfect! ... Only Jesus can do that!

And he was not only well, because he was also fit. He could have been weak, or he could have been stiff ... but he wasn't! ... He was 'raring' to go, and to tell everyone what Jesus had done for him. He was excited about it (v.45)! Jesus had told him to go to the temple and see the priest ... and to do that, he had to walk all the way from Galilee to Jerusalem (v.44), almost 70 miles!

The Lord gave him stringent instructions how he must not tell anyone about the healing ... in fact, Jesus was *abrupt* because Mark used a very direct word to describe how Jesus instructed this man, he *straitly [immediately] charged [ἐμβριμάομαι, demanded]* him. It actually means Jesus *snorted* at him. It was like, "I'm warning you, get out of here and don't tell anyone!" ... See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest (v.44).

But, when something so life-changing has happened to you, how could you *not* say anything? Surely you would want to tell everyone ... and besides, what's the problem?! Why not?! Was Jesus exaggerating? No, He wouldn't mislead the man ... Here is why He told him not to tell anyone ... Jesus gave him a simple command, - not a difficult one. This man called him "Lord" (Lk. 5:12) ... here is the test ... Jesus is setting out to establish whether or not this man was obedient, and since the man had said "Lord", he ought to do as the Lord told him. The Lord told him plainly and directly, - it wasn't a complicated command, See thou say nothing to any man. Don't tell anybody. Go straight to the priest in the temple at Jerusalem, and offer the sacrifices in accordance with the Law of Moses.

Once he would have arrived there, - after all those miles of travelling, - Lev. 14 tells us there was a process he had to go through to verify he was healed and cleansed. Lev. 14 instructed him to go to the priest where he would be examined. Then two birds would be taken and one would have been killed over running water. Then the living bird would be taken along with cedar, scarlet and hyssop and dipped in the blood of the dead bird ... and then the living bird would be allowed to fly off free.

The man would then wash himself and his clothes, and shave, - this was part of his ceremonial and symbolic cleansing, - and then he would go away. He would come back in seven days time and be re-examined. He had to shave his hair again, and his eyebrows, and sacrifice two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb, and 3/10ths of fine flour mixed with oil. ... It was a very particular ceremony ... He would then be touched on the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the right great toe with a mixture of both oil and blood.

He would then be examined for the third and final time, and if he is fully and really cured, he would receive a certificate saying he was cleansed.

So, that was what Jesus told this leper to go and do, so as to be a *testimony unto them [i.e. the priests]*. It had to be confirmed by the priests in the temple in Jerusalem. ... What else is there here? Well, Jesus wanted these priests in the temple to know that this man has been healed by His power, and He also wanted those priests to know He upheld the Law of Moses. ... Jesus had not come to be a rebel, but He had come to fulfil the Law, *Mt. 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

This was a witness to the priests. It was evidence being brought to them by this leper that Jesus heals and the message accompanying the healing establishes Him as the Messiah, - that was why Jesus told this former leper to go to the temple, and to say nothing about what had been done until he arrived there. And then, you tell those priests in that temple what Jesus has done ... and go through all the tests, and when they see you have been healed, then you will be a testimony unto them (v.44) of My power ... the power that only belongs to the Son of God! In other words, this leper was instructed by Jesus to bring convincing testimony to these priests of Who He is! The testimony then would challenge the priests to decide on the validity of Jesus' claims to be the Messiah.

Now, we know they all screamed on the "Good Friday" for His blood and condemned themselves in the process, *Mt. 27:25 His blood [be] on us, and on our children* ... but that is the reason Jesus wanted the man to give a testimony to the priests. He wanted to give them the opportunity to acknowledge Him as the Messiah. What did the leper do, though? *But he went out, and began to publish [it] much, and to blaze abroad the matter (v.45)* ... He went out, and he did exactly what Jesus told him not to do! ... He was disobedient, and that spoiled the opportunity for the testimony to the priests, which is what the Lord wanted this man to present.

And another consequence of this man's disobedience was that Jesus had to depart out of the city and go to the more unpopulated areas, *insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.* ... Jesus had a ministry to carry out in all Galilee (v.39), but this leper who wouldn't do what he was told meant Jesus had to take a different direction. Why? Because there was so much hysteria, - and people would have wanted to meet Him for the wrong reasons.

God is sovereign, of course, and this frustration would have been part of His plan but, - humanly-speaking, - this indicated how the ministry in Galilee was about to, - in the will of the Lord, - move further afield. There was simply too many people wanting miracles, rather than listening and accepting Christ's preaching of the Kingdom of God, and the necessity for repentance, and acceptance of the Gospel (Mk. 1:15). His fame had so spread abroad throughout the region (v.28). Look also at 2:13 *And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him ... 3:7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, [NET Notes, TGC, TSK] <sup>8</sup> And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and [from] beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. <sup>9</sup> And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.*

Maybe Jesus wanted to go into a town where someone lived who couldn't make it out to the country ... Well, this man not being able to hold his counsel meant Jesus couldn't go and see that person. If the leper had kept quiet and done what he was told, Jesus could have stayed in His home-region of Galilee for a while longer ... but ultimately, it wasn't His Father's will.

Let's notice one final observation. Jesus was travelling and preaching through the towns and villages of Galilee, - all the populated areas ... And in from the desert, - in from the outside, - came a leper. Here is the point ... The leper started in the wilderness but after meeting Jesus, he was able to mingle in the city and among his own people again. ... What about Jesus? He started in the city but after meeting the leper, He was the One Who went into the isolation of the wilderness (v.45). In other words, the Saviour took the place of the leper. ... And I'm sure you can see where we are going with this ... Jesus also took the place of the sinner in the wilderness of the cross.

... We met Him when we were *brought into* the Kingdom of God, but the only way that was achieved was when our Saviour came from the glories of the Heavenly city into the wilderness of this sinful world. He left the presence of His Father and He came into our isolation. That is what He did on the cross because Jesus was forsaken, and He became a Man of sorrows, - that's what a leper was, and that is what a sinner is. Our faces were hid from Him. There was no beauty that we should desire Him. He bore our griefs, He carried our sorrows, He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted ... In the plan of God for our salvation, He became the outcast so that we would be accepted in the presence of His Father.

A trembling soul, I sought the Lord,  
 My sin confessed, my guilt deplored;  
 How soft and sweet His word to me:  
 "I took thy place and died for thee."

*No other hope, no other plea:  
 He took my place and died for me.  
 O precious Lamb of Calvary!  
 He took my place and died for me.*

Here rests my heart; assurance sweet,  
 His blessed work He will complete,  
 Since in His love so great and free  
 He took my place and died for me.

When sorrow veils the smiling day,  
 When evil foes beset my way,  
 Abundant grace in Him I see;  
 He took my place and died for me.

No room for doubt, no room for fears,  
 When to my view the cross appears;  
 My joyful song shall ever be:  
 He took my place and died for me.

... He came that day to free the leper from the wilderness, - cleansed, healed, restored, - ... That is how God's salvation works, in Christ, a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Cor. 3:17).