

THE KING'S AUTHORITY
MATTHEW 9:1-8



I have a friend who — right before he gives his opinion on what I should do — likes to say, “If I were king for the day...” I think he means that jokingly. I think.

What would you do if you were king for the day? Poet Judith Viorst, writing in the voice of elementary-aged Alexander gives one opinion, in the poem, “If I were in charge of the world...”

If I were in charge of the world
I'd cancel oatmeal,
Monday mornings,
Allergy shots, and also Sara Steinberg.

If I were in charge of the world
There'd be brighter night lights,
Healthier hamsters, and
Basketball baskets forty-eight inches lower.

If I were in charge of the world
You wouldn't have lonely.
You wouldn't have clean.
You wouldn't have bedtimes.
Or "Don't punch your sister."
You wouldn't even have sisters.

If I were in charge of the world
A chocolate sundae with whipped cream and nuts would be a vegetable
All 007 movies would be G,
And a person who sometimes forgot to brush,
And sometimes forgot to flush,
Would still be allowed to be
In charge of the world.

Fortunately, Alexander, my friend, and you and I are not in charge of the world. We are not good candidates for kingdom and sovereignty. But there is One who is supremely qualified to be King — Jesus.

The book of Matthew presents Jesus Christ as the King of Israel, the promised Messiah to fulfill the covenantal promises to Israel. The question throughout Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry is “Would Israel have Him as her King?” She would not. The King was rejected, crucified and resurrected, and returned to Heaven until He would come in a second advent and set up His throne in Jerusalem.

But Matthew is not just presenting Jesus as King of Israel. He also demonstrates that He is King of all men — King of the earth and King of the Gentiles, and available to Gentiles as their Savior and King. Only Matthew tells us the story of the appearance of the Magi in the birth account of Christ — Gentiles at the birth of Israel's King. He also tells of the Gentile centurion's faith (8:10), the promise of the church (16:18

— the only use of the term “church” in the gospels) which would include Gentiles, the promise of the preaching of the Kingdom to all the nations (24:14), and the Great Commission taking the gospel to the nations (28:18-20). Matthew — the gospel writer to the Jews — is preoccupied with Israel’s, and with the presentation of King Jesus to the nations.

Who is this King? That’s what we are considering in these weeks heading into the Advent season; this morning we will see the authority of the King in Matthew 9. Just how authoritative is this King Jesus? He is authoritative over every realm, but His great authority is for our greatest problem —

KING JESUS’ AUTHORITY IS EXTENSIVE ENOUGH TO ATONE FOR EVERY SIN.

King Jesus reveals **four aspects** of His authority:

1. **The King’s Authority is for DEEDS of Sin (vv. 1-2)**
2. **The King’s Authority is for HEARTS of Sin (vv. 3-6a)**
 - ✓ The accusation against the King’s authority (v. 3)
 - ✓ The King’s evaluation of the accusation (vv. 4-5)
 - ✓ The King’s demonstration of His authority (v. 6a)
3. **The King’s Authority is for COMPASSION (vv. 6b-7)**
4. **The King’s Authority is for WORSHIP (v. 8)**

1. The King's Authority is for DEEDS of Sin (vv. 1-2)

- In chapters 8-10, Matthew presents Jesus as King in three ways:
 - ✓ *He is King (sovereign) over the physical realm:*
 - He cleanses a leper (8:3)
 - He heals the (Gentile) centurion's servant (8:13)
 - He heals Peter's mother-in-law (8:15)
 - He healed the demon-possessed (8:28ff)
 - He healed a variety of illnesses (9:18ff, 32)
 - ✓ *He is King over Israel* — and he implies that by saying that Jesus **came to His own city**.
 - Jesus' birth city was Bethlehem and His home city was Nazareth, but neither of those are the city that Matthew means with this phrase.
 - **His own city** refers to the city that served as His base of ministry — Capernaum (4:13). And Matthew makes the point that Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would come from this region (4:14-16). When Jesus operates in Capernaum, He is fulfilling more prophecy as the Messiah presented to Israel as the fulfillment of God's promises. He is the promised King.
 - ✓ *He is King over sin*, which is the primary point in this story.
- We know from the parallel accounts in Mark and Luke that Jesus was in a home (perhaps Peter's?) and that it quickly filled up with people, so those who brought the paralytic man to Jesus couldn't get in the house, so they took the stairs to the roof, removed the tiles of the roof and lowered the man down in front of Christ.
 - ✓ Matthew omits those details because he wants us to see the essence of the story, including the urgency of the men who brought the paralytic to Jesus and their faith that Jesus could help the man.
 - ✓ The conjunction **and** is actually a compound phrase that is often translated "and behold." One translation renders it "Just then" — and that's helpful because it captures the immediacy of the act.
 - ✓ And the verb **brought** has the sense of "they were bringing" — it suggests that they were going as fast as they could but because they had to carry the man, their progress was slow and the house was full by the time they got there.
 - ✓ While the paralytic and his friends do not speak in this story, they are obviously confident in Jesus' ability to help the man, which is why they hurried to see Him.
- Matthew also omits some of the details so that the words of Jesus are particularly highlighted:
 - ✓ **Take courage, son** — The word **son** is actually "child" — it is a term of affection and endearment. And Jesus exhorts him to be **courageous** — to be resolute in a time of trial and danger.

✓ **Your sins are forgiven** —

- Jesus is emphatic in the way he says this: “*Forgiven* are your sins!” (The word **forgiven** is the first word in the clause, so Jesus was particularly wanting to emphasize it.)
 - ... The word **forgive** has the idea of “removal” or remission — they have been sent away. God no longer counts them against us (cf. **Ps. 103:12** — “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us”).
 - ... Christ is also claiming clearly to be the One who can remove sin (and He will claim that shortly on the basis of His Messianic Kingship). It is by His declaration that the man’s sins are remitted; the remission is not a promise (future tense) or based on some past event (aorist tense) but presently and immediately forgiven (present tense) by the word of Christ.
 - ... And it is his sins that are forgiven — the word is *hamartia* — “rebelliously miss the mark.” He is a sinner by his nature and by his actions, and it is all removed.
- This forgiveness is not because Jesus was “being nice to a suffering man. It was a response to faith — **seeing their faith**. Forgiveness and salvation is always given only through faith and this was no exception (which also means that the faith Jesus observed was not just of the men who carried the paralytic, but also the faith of the paralytic; it is probably safe to imagine that he compelled and urged them to take him to Jesus because He believed in Him as Messiah).
- Some have suggested that Jesus told him to be courageous and then forgave him because his paralysis was directly connected in some way to his sin — either sin that caused the paralysis or that the paralysis was a clear discipline for his sinful lifestyle or acts. *We can’t know that*.
- What *is* important to recognize is that whether or not the paralysis was a consequence of some sin of his, it *is* true that his sin nature and acts of sin were a greater problem for him than his paralysis (because that is the greatest problem for all of us).

- The message of Matthew is that the King has come. By definition a king is authoritative; Christ as King is *supremely* authoritative. And of astounding news to both Jew and Gentile is that Christ is authoritative over sin; Adam’s sin in Genesis 3 is not finally determinative (we can be freed from our sin nature) and our own sin is not finally condemning (we can be freed from the power of sin).
- The good news of Christ’s kingship is that He has (present tense) the authority to deal with the root issue of man’s sin. He does not overlook sin; He will not “excuse” it. But He will forgive it.
 - ✓ If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, this is a reminder that you have an immense problem with sin and there is only one way out — the same way as the paralytic — to believe He can/will forgive.
 - ✓ If you do not yet believe, I urge you to run to Christ in faith and seek His forgiveness.
 - ✓ If you are a believer in Christ, then I urge you to give thanks for His great gift of removing sin.
- Christ’s authority is sufficient to remove sin and His authority also...

2. The King's Authority is for HEARTS of Sin (vv. 3-6a)

• The accusation against the King's authority (v. 3)

- ✓ The **scribes** in verse three were not merely men who “copied” the scrolls — “copyists.” They were experts in the Mosaic Law; they were religious “lawyers” and many were also Pharisees.
- ✓ A group of them observed what Jesus did (He was *always* being scrutinized by religious leaders).
- ✓ They spoke amongst **themselves** — evidently so quietly that they could not be heard, though Jesus knew what they were saying and thinking (v. 4).
- ✓ Their evaluation/accusation against Jesus was **This fellow** (evidently they hated Him so much they wouldn't even pronounce His name) **blasphemes**.
 - To blaspheme God meant that God's honor or reputation was maligned and impugned. It was to remove or denigrate God's glory/majesty.
 - How did Jesus blaspheme God (in their estimation)? He was claiming to do something only God can do (forgive sin). So they understood this as a declaration of His deity, Kingship, and authority. They (and all Israel) wanted a King/Messiah — but they didn't want Jesus.
- ✓ But they did not have the last word on the subject...

• The King's evaluation of the accusation (vv. 4-5)

- ✓ They wrongly accused Jesus of the external act of blasphemy, but Jesus rightly knew of the internal condition of their hearts (suggesting another form of authority over them).
- ✓ **Jesus knowing their thoughts** — they spoke quietly so none could hear, but Jesus was not dependent on hearing words — He intimately knows the thoughts and intentions of all men's hearts (e.g., **Jn. 2:24-25**).
- ✓ He not only knows their thoughts, but He has the right (authority) to evaluate their thoughts — **why are you thinking evil in your hearts?**
 - The problem with the Scribes was not just what they did, but what they desired/thought.
 - Men's sin problems are always internal problems. And Christ has both the knowledge of men's heart problems and the right to judge those problems (cf. **Jn. 5:26-27**). So Jesus can also say that all authority has been given to Him, both in Heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18).
- ✓ What is significant here is that these men were used to making pronouncements on the interpretation of the Law and how others were or were not complying with the Law. Now *they* are being condemned by the author of the Law. Jesus reveals His right to judge sin by His next question.
- ✓ **Which is easier to say...?** It's easier to **say** “you are forgiven” because there is no ability to test the statement. We will immediately know if He has power to heal when He says “get up and walk...”
- ✓ It is harder to *forgive* sin, but it is much easier to say “I forgive...” Jesus is setting up a conclusive demonstration of His ability and write to evaluate and judge them as the authoritative King.

• The King's demonstration of His authority (v. 6a)

- ✓ Notice the purpose clause at the beginning of v. 6 — “so that...” The reason He heals the man physically is to make a point spiritually — the King is authoritative. That’s the reason for this story.
- ✓ [It can be hard to interpret narrative stories: often the intent of the story is revealed in the dialog, which is exactly what Matthew does for us in this story; Jesus tells us how to interpret the story.]
- ✓ This whole event is about one reality — the authoritative kingship of Jesus —
 - **Son of Man** is a Messianic term; it is Jesus’ favorite description of Himself (84 of its 88x in the NT are in the Gospels — 31x in Matthew). The term refers not only to the real manhood of the Messiah, but His inherent authority (cf. **Dan. 7:13-14**).
 - That authority is exactly what Jesus wants us to understand about Him — **has authority on earth to forgive** — He has a prerogative to control something — in this instance, He controls who is and who is not forgiven. The **Son of Man** reigns in Heaven, but He also rules **on earth**. Christ’s authority is absolute (physical and spiritual) and limitless (Heaven and earth).
- This story affirms the right of King Jesus to evaluate both externally and internally our actions and motives — our sins of commission and desire. And it is worth noting that grace for forgiveness is available (v. 2), but if one does not come to Him in faith, there is also a warning of judgment. We should be encouraged by grace but also warned of His judgment: if we do not repent and believe, then He will not hesitate as the majestic Son of Man to evaluate and judge every man’s heart.
- There is still a third component to the King’s authority in this story...

3. The King’s Authority is for **COMPASSION** (vv. 6b-7)

- To demonstrate His authority to judge sin, King Jesus (the **Son of Man**) healed the paralytic. He did the lesser to demonstrate His ability and right to do the greater.
- When Jesus says, **Get up, pick up your bed and go home**, He is giving a command and making a provision. He is authoritatively telling Him what to do, but He is also revealing His provision.
 - ✓ He was compassionate towards the man’s spiritual plight. The paralytic’s real problem was his spiritual problem of sin — and Jesus demonstrated that He forgave the sin by healing Him.
 - ✓ He was also compassionate toward His physical plight: the man was suffering physically — and Christ demonstrated His care of that as well. He is compassionate and sympathetic to suffering.
 - ✓ **And he got up and went home** (v. 7) is severely understated; he came with four friends and only because four friends brought him, and now he walked (ran?) home, (happily) alone!
 - ✓ Do you notice that in this story neither the paralytic nor his friends talk — only Jesus. That’s so we don’t miss the point of the story — Jesus and His compassionate authority are the singular point.

4. The King's Authority is for WORSHIP (v. 8)

- The question in the gospels and every story about Jesus is “what will you do about Him?” “How will you respond to Him?” “He is revealed as authoritative, what will you do/say because of Him?”
 - ✓ When Matthew mentions *the crowds*, it is a significant change of focus. To this point, everything has been about the man, his friends, and the Scribes. We have almost forgotten that all this happened in a very crowded house (and probably courtyard/street) in front of many people.
 - ✓ Matthew pulls back the close-up lens from the paralytic to remind us with a wide-angle crowd shot to remind us that many have been watching. How will they respond?
- They respond with *awe* and *glory to God* — the word *awe* actually is “fear.” They “trembled” and were overwhelmed by the power of Christ’s words and actions.
 - ✓ But that fear also resulted in them *glorifying God* — they spoke delightedly & truthfully about God.
 - ✓ Specifically, they recognized the unique nature of what Christ — He had *authority* (the same word that Jesus used in v. 6).
 - ✓ This is the very thing that exposure to Christ should do — it should produce a reverence of Him that recognizes Him as being singular in His power and authority, and also should draw us to Him in enjoyment and trust.
 - ✓ There is a hint of something lacking in their response, though: their excitement was that God had *given* such authority *to men*.
 - Jesus had been explicit that the authority was given to the *Son of Man* (v. 6) — He is making a claim on the Messianic throne of David and claiming deity and unique authority.
 - They thought that it was exciting that “a man” (i.e., any man) might have authority. They missed the Messianic component. They viewed Jesus as just another man. And that is to make the greatest and most tragic error of life — it is to miss the very core of the gospel.
 - He came to be worshipped as the Kingly Son of Man, and they saw Him only as a great man.
 - Do you see Jesus as a great teacher? Or do you worship Him as the only and authoritative King of all men — the One who sees all that we do and knows all that we want?
 - How we answer that question not only determines where we will spend eternity, but also will determine if we will know and experience His grace and friendship in our lives now.
 - If you have not believed in Him previously, will you believe in Him now?

BENEDICTION: Jude 24-25