

Matthew 8:23-9:8

Intro/Starter

What explanations do people put forward as to why they think the world is the way that it is?

The problems identified are multitudinous. For example, ecologists would point to the way in which we have mistreated our environment. Others concerned for people's financial well-being might point to capitalism. Those medically inclined would suggest that humanity's susceptibility to illness and disease constitutes our greatest threat. Christians would say that the world is as it is because of sin committed against our Creator (Genesis 3; Romans 8).

What are some of the remedies that people suggest?

Remedies are very much related to the problems identified. For example, if the problems are seen as being economic in nature, so will be the suggested solutions. Christians see in Jesus, and his death and resurrection, the remedy to our estrangement from our Creator.

Jesus' authority over nature

Read Matthew 8:23-27.

In what way do we see Jesus' humanity in this passage? In what way do we see that he is more than a man?

We see Jesus' humanity in that he was evidently tired and needed rest (v. 24).

It is no mere man who can calm such a furious storm with just a word (v. 26).

What is the response of the disciples?

They are amazed and ask, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (v. 27).

When was the last time you were amazed at Jesus? What inadequate views of Jesus might prevent us from being as amazed at him as we ought to be?

Allow group members to reflect and share. Sadly, we are less often amazed than we ought to be.

We can sometimes slip into thinking of Jesus merely as being our best friend or perhaps as our personal therapist. He is not less but as this passage makes clear he is most certainly more.

Jesus' authority over demons

Read Matthew 8:28-34.

How do the demon-possessed men answer the disciples' question from verse 27?

The disciples' question was, "What kind of man is this?" The demon-possessed men proclaim that Jesus is the "Son of God" (v. 29).

In what way does Jesus show his authority here?

These men are so violent that they prevented others from accessing that part of the area (v. 28) yet with just a word ("Go!", v. 32) Jesus is able to send the demons into a herd of pigs.

How do the people of the town respond? In what way might this serve as a warning to us?

Interestingly, the townsfolk plead with Jesus to leave their region (v. 34).

Despite acknowledging Jesus' authority we may struggle to accept him and find room in our hearts for him.

Jesus' authority to forgive sins

Read Matthew 9:1-8.

How do Jesus' words and actions here indicate what truly is humanity's greatest problem?

Faced with the evident need of this man's paralysis Jesus expresses the priority of the man's sins and his forgiveness (v. 2)

How does Jesus show his authority once again in this passage?

He claims to be able to forgive sin – something that, as the teachers of the law indicate, is the domain of the divine (v. 3). With a word, and in demonstration of his ability to forgive, he also heals the man's paralysis (vv. 6-7).

Given what we have seen of Jesus' authority in these passages, what would be an appropriate response to him?

As the one who has authority over nature and demons, and with authority to forgive sins, we are to acknowledge him as King and entrust ourselves to him for our forgiveness.