



Excerpts from *The Great Physician*
For study related to the Bible Lesson March 8 - 14, 2010

Introductory Note – *The Great Physician*, Vols 1 & 2 were written by Vinton Dearing, Christian Scientist, who was Professor of English at UCLA where he taught the English Bible as Literature for forty years. The book is a composite translation of the four Gospels, organized by event rather than book, and includes a commentary. Because of the composite nature of the translation and commentary, the excerpts below may cover more topics than the citation in the Lesson. The paperback two-volume set of books is available for purchase on amazon.com and a hardback study edition available through amazon.com and at vintondearing.com.

SECTION V – B14 (Matthew 4:23)

A WIDER FIELD OF ACTIVITY

Mark 1:39 Matthew 4:23-25 Luke 4:44

Matthew now rejoins the others. Mark says: “And he went into all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and throwing out demons.” (Luke says that Jesus “was preaching in the synagogues of Judea,” but as “Judea” is a slip of the pen most manuscripts have “Galilee” instead.) Matthew says: “And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom [of God, that is, that it had drawn near and was knocking at the door, waiting to be recognized], and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. And his fame went out into all Syria [the next Roman province to the north, roughly modern Syria]. And they brought to him all those ill with different sicknesses and those in great pain, and demoniacs and epileptics and paralytics, and he healed them. And many crowds followed him [that came] from Galilee and the Decapolis [east of Galilee] and Jerusalem and Judea and across [east of] the Jordan [that is, from Perea].”⁸⁰

Footnotes

80. For the word translated “epileptics” see pp. 340-341.

SECTION V – B15 (Matthew 12:9-13)

A WITHERED HAND HEALED

Mark 3:1-6 Matthew 12:9-14 Luke 6:6-11

Continuing with Mark as before. “And he went into the synagogue again and there was a man there having [his] hand withered. And they were watching him closely, to accuse him if he would heal him on the Sabbath days.

[Jesus, perfectly aware of the atmosphere of the place and determined not to be diverted from his God-appointed task, set about clearing the air by a frontal attack which took advantage of human reason.] “And he says to the man having the withered hand, ‘Rouse up where you

are.¹²⁷

“And he says to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or [only] to do evil [destroy things; demolition was allowed on the Sabbath if it was not a prelude to new use of the ground. Is it lawful] to save [heal] a person or [only] to kill [sacrificial animals in the temple precincts]?’

“But they were silent.”

“And looking around at them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their heart, he says to the man, ‘Extend the hand.’

“And he extended [it], and his hand was restored.

“And the Pharisees went out and at once, with the Herodians, were giving [their] plan against him how they would kill him.”

Here, it was not convenient to remove the man from the miasma of hate in the place. Instead, it was the miasma that removed itself, taking with it those who had wedded themselves to it, and giving the man who had been healed an opportunity to savor his healing in peace.

In Matthew’s version of the healing, Jesus does not ask but is asked whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath and replies, “Who among you will be a person who will have [only] one sheep, and if this will fall into a pit on the Sabbath days, will he not take hold of it and raise [it]? So how much more valuable a man is than a sheep. Likewise it’s lawful to do well on the Sabbath.” Another argument from lesser to greater. The agreement of Mark and Luke against Matthew suggests that their account of the event is more correct. Nevertheless, Matthew apparently records a genuine argument of Jesus’, for we have another version of it later on in Luke.¹²⁸

Mark alone mentions the Herodians here (he and Matthew also speak of them later as questioning Jesus about whether to pay taxes to the Romans). We do not know exactly whom our authors had in mind, since none of the other sources for the history of the times mentions Herodians as such. But the tetrarch Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, ruled Galilee under the Romans, and those in his court or his army or his civil service or otherwise loyal to him may have feared that Jesus would lead a revolution, and that Antipas would lose his throne whatever the outcome: if the revolutionaries won, they would make Jesus king, and if the Romans won, they would replace Antipas for failing to keep the peace. We shall see that those who brought Jesus to trial reasoned in this way about his danger to them and to their nation.

Luke alone specifies that it was the man’s right hand that was withered. He is less explicit than Mark and Matthew about the Pharisees’ reaction to the healing, saying only that “they were filled with fury, and discussed with each other what they could do to Jesus.”¹²⁹

Matthew and Luke do not mention Jesus’ anger and sorrow, a fact that has been taken as evidence that Mark was the first written of the Gospels. The argument is that Matthew and Luke omitted the detail so as to make Jesus appear more divine. As I explain in Chapter VII, I do not find the argument convincing.

We may be sure that Jesus’ anger, if Mark is correct about it, did not extend to the man with the withered hand. Love was fundamental in Jesus’ thinking, and contemporary experience with spiritual healing indicates that without love he could not have healed as he did. The same consideration indicates that Jesus was not angry with the people who were hardhearted, he was angry with hardness of heart and its devilish assertion of power to cut people off from God’s love.

Footnotes

127. "Where you are": literally, "in the middle."

128. Luke 14:1-6.

129. "Could do": the verb is in the optative mood and therefore may mean "wanted to do."