

VOTC.1

Matthew 8: 17, "This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

Through Jesus Christ, God begins to reverse the effects of death. Are you afraid of death? Are you afraid of losing out on life? Am I missing out on the fun? The anger and the loneliness you often feel come from those fears. Fights break out. They come from envy, greed, and pride. One of the gifts the Christ Jesus brings is a reversal of those effects.

In some sense, the reversal of the effects of death already began in the Old Testament. God established his holiness amid the ancient nations. To do this, he started a war on death. He took the nation of Israel and gave her a way of holiness and set her light among the nations. He established laws to teach Israel about the effects of death because he wanted to teach Israel what life was all about.

If you read Numbers 19, you learn of specific legislation from God telling Israelites that if they touched a dead body, they were unclean for so long. To end that state of uncleanness you had to wash on the 3^d and the 7th day. Why? By touching the dead, you were carrying the curse of death in your body until you had it symbolically washed off. If you've ever tried to read through the Bible, you've probably gotten stuck in all the legislation in Leviticus. All that legislation is God carving out a place of life where his people would flourish.

All this was to prepare his people and through his people the world for when he would send his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus' ministry on earth is to deal with the effects of death. The words of Matthew 8:17, "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases" are sandwiched between several stories, which demonstrate what it means that Christ deals with the effects of death.

The first of these stories, found at the beginning of Matthew 8 is the story of a leper that came to Jesus. According to Jewish law, a leper was unclean. Why was he unclean? It was because the flesh under his skin was exposed. That flesh was where the curse of death lay. That flesh was white. It represented a false glory as if the leper was claiming to be God. The leprosy that is found in the scripture is not what we call leprosy. In the scripture, people are often cursed with leprosy when they act out of pride. When you became leprous, you were no longer allowed to come into the temple. You were no longer allowed to join the congregation of God's people in communion with God. Leprosy represented death because by it you were separated from God. It symbolized death because you were separated from the people of God. Leprosy was social death.

Jesus' other miracles also demonstrate Christ's war against death. He heals a paralytic, someone who is in a death like state. Shortly after our passage, he raises Jairus' daughter from the dead. All these miracles are supposed to teach us about our state without God. Without God in our life, we are under death. We are paralyzed spiritually. We are unclean before a pure and sinless God, who knows nothing but life. Jesus comes to overturn the rule of death.

Jesus doesn't only do this by healing people, but by bearing the curse of death in his body. He bore our illnesses and diseases. This is illustrated by Christ's touch. If you read the gospels, you will see again and again how Christ reaches out and touches people. He signifies by this that the power of life goes out of him while he takes on the death that is in that person. Christ is so filled by the desire to save us that he

goes to the gruesome and painful death of the cross bearing our illnesses and diseases. We are healed. He becomes unclean. He becomes sin for our sake.

He does this so that we may have life. Christ bore our illnesses and diseases to the grave. He brought them to a place where they would die. When Christ rose from the dead, those illnesses and diseases stayed dead. Death no longer had any power over the body of Christ.

If you want to share in the life, which Christ offers, come to him. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. Seek him, do everything you can to find him, for he gives good things to those who seek him out. Come and put to death envy and greed and pride on the cross of Christ and find the life of joy in communion with God.

Death exists. The effects of death still exist. Christians are well aware of sickness and death, blindness and deafness, and any of the other problems that represent death to us. We must still die, and most Christians have some fear of that moment. But because of Christ, objectively speaking, the sting of death, the power of death, is gone.

Christians don't need to be afraid of missing out. People do stupid things, often sinful things because they believe they will miss out on the joys of marriage or miss out on financial success. Christians may look for a reward in heaven. For even though death is not yet defeated on this earth, we know that when our Lord comes back, death will die. Come, believe and partake of the eternal life you may share with a resurrected Lord.