

Chapter 1

Jesus' Healing of the Man with the Withered Hand in Matthew 12:9-14: A Model for Ministry in Africa

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Jesus' healing of the man with the withered hand in Matt 12:9-14 can serve as a model for healing for the church in Africa. Jesus placed high value on human health and wellness in his ministry. Africans regard good health as equivalent with life itself. Studies (see Samuels et al., 2010; Mati, 2013; Magezi, 2018) have shown that the role that the church in Africa can play in relation to provision of healthcare is underutilized. The church in Africa should provide preventive and curative aspects of healthcare to improve the wellbeing of Africans in the continent. This is an exegetical study. The article utilized the text-centered approach to biblical interpretation. The leaders of the church in Africa, Bible students, political leaders, and members of the general public who are concerned with provision of healthcare in Africa would find this article useful. I argue that the provision of preventive and curative healthcare in Africa by the church would prolong the lifespan of Africans. I recommend that (1) that church embarks on periodic and sustained health education campaign in African communities; (2) that the church establishes clinics, hospitals, and sanitariums to provide preventive and curative health ministries in Africa; and (3) that church members are encouraged to adopt good healthy lifestyles to serve as good examples to their communities. These would help promote

improved health among Africans. It would also draw Africans closer to Jesus and make Christianity attractive and acceptable to them.

Keywords: Matthew 12:9-14, Africa, Healthcare, the church, Jesus Christ.

I. Introduction

Matthew 12:9-14 has been interpreted focusing on its sociological, legal, and ethical dimensions (Kembrough, 1966, pp. 483-502). Many studies have concentrated on the law, especially the Sabbath and its implications on Christianity today (Reid, 1998, 141-149; Kubo, 1978). Most studies have been done on the Christological implications of the text (see Loader, 2002). However, little studies comparatively have emphasized the importance of healing and the curative dimension of the text, especially in the African context.

Therefore, a study of the second Sabbath conflict in Matthew's gospel as a model for healing in Africa seems to be in order. This is an exegetical study. The exegetical study focused on the text-centered approach of biblical interpretation. This approach includes the following: (1) Textual (syntax and text-grammar), which investigated the grammar of some key words and how they relate to each other in the text; (2) Lexical and semantics, which included an investigation of the lexical meaning of some key words in the text such; (3) Literary (style and structure), which investigated the genre, purpose, theme, and structure of the text in the respective gospels of each text and how they contribute to the meaning of the respective texts; and (4) Inner-textual and inter-textual procedures, which investigated the synoptic parallels of the Matt 12:1-8 as in Mark 2:23-28; and Luke 6:1-5 and 1 Sam 21:1-6, and how they contribute to the understanding of the subject under study (see Hayes and Holladay, 1987, 59-72; Müller, 2006; pp. 111-112; Diop, 2006, pp. 135-151; Rice, 2006, pp. 205-222).

The main objective of study was to determine how a textual study of Jesus' Sabbath healing in Matt 12:9-14 can provide a model for healing in the African context. This research will benefit the clergy and bible students who will make a research about the Sabbath controversy in Matthew 12:1-8, especially as it relates to the African context. Second, it has also added to the existing literature on the interpretation of the second Sabbath conflict in Matt 12:9-14. This article is divided into introduction, the Sabbath conflicts in the canonical Gospels, chiasmic structure of Matthew 12:9-14, lexical/syntactical analysis of Matthew 12:9-14, implications, summary, Jesus' healing of the man in

Mark, Jesus' healing of the man in Luke, Jesus' healing of the man in Matthew, Jesus' healing of the man in Matt 12:9-14 as a model for ministry in Africa, summary and conclusion.

For the purpose of this paper, the following terms are defined: Social diffusion: "a social process through which cultural knowledge, practices and materials spread from one system to another." (Crossman, 2012). The church: The Christian community, in this article, in Africa. Positive religious coping: "Positive religious coping is where an individual has a close relationship with a higher power, is spiritually connected with others, and has a benevolent world view." (Holt, Clark, & Roth, 2014). Negative religious coping: "Negative religious coping involves spiritual struggle with one's self, others, and a higher power." (Holt, Clark, & Roth, 2014)

II. The Sabbath Conflicts in the Canonical Gospels

The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees is a basic feature of the Sabbath in the NT. Many healings Jesus performed on the Sabbath suggest that he considered the Sabbath an appropriate day for healing the sick. In the Sabbath conflicts, Jesus (a) defended his disciples for plucking grains as they passed through the corn field on their mission on the Sabbath (Matt 12:3-14; Mark 2:23-26; Luke 6:1-4); (b) defended healing on the Sabbath and proceeded to heal the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-5; Matt 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11); (c) healed a woman who was ill for 18 years on the Sabbath and defended his action (Luke 13:10-17); (d) healed a man with dropsy on the Sabbath and defended his action (Luke 14:1-6); (e) healed an impotent man at the pool of Bethzatha, and defended his action (John 5:1-18); and (f) healed a man who was blind since birth and defended His action (John 9:1-41) (see Waltermann, 1977, 5:186). However, the Pharisees considered Jesus healings on the Sabbath as work and violations of the Sabbath commandments. The healings in the gospels, especially in Matthew and Luke, are associated with the imminence of the kingdom of God, foreshadowed in the holiness of the Sabbath day (Kembrough, 1966, pp. 483-502; Waterman, 1977, 5:185-186; Specht, 1982, p. 92; Roshward, 1985, p. 361; G. F. Hasel, 1992, 5:849; Reid, 1998, p. 142; Schuele, 2009, 5:9).

III. Chiastic Structure of Matthew 12:9-14

The second Sabbath pericope in Matt 12:9-14 is composed in a ring

form around the image of the sheep in the pit. The story is composed according to the scheme A B C D C1 B1 A1. A and A1 are the introduction and conclusion. In 'A,' Jesus enters 'their' synagogue (v. 9); in 'A1' the Pharisees exit the synagogue (v. 14). 'B' and B1 have ἄνθρωπος χεῖρ, and C and C1 have ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν. These parallels correspond with each other in content and catchwords while Jesus's conflict with the Pharisees is at the center. The healing is moved to the end (v. 13) and that the genre of the story is a controversy dialogue (see Luz, 2001, p. 186; Ennulat, 1994, p. 186).

- A Introduction: Jesus enters (ἦλθεν) 'their' synagogue (v. 9)
- B ἄνθρωπος χεῖρ (v. 10a)
- C ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν (v. 10b)
- D a human being is worth than a sheep (vv. 11-12a)
- C1 ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν (v. 12b)
- B1 ἄνθρωπος χεῖρ (v. 13)
- A1 Conclusion: The Pharisees go out (ἐξεληθόντες) (v. 14)

From the above chiasm, the importance of healing a human being (compared to a sheep) is the emphasis of the story of Matt 12:9-14. This seems to underscore the importance of Jesus' healing ministry. The story of the healing of the man whose hand was withered may serve as a model for healing in Africa in spreading the gospel of Christ. Having dealt with the structure of Matt 12:9-14, the article proceeds to analyse the text (Matt 12:9-14).

IV. Syntactical Analysis of Matthew 12:9-14

Matthew 12:9-14 records the second of the two Sabbath conflict stories in Matthew's gospel. It relates Jesus' visit to a synagogue (12:9). Jesus' response (12:11-13) to the Pharisees' question about whether it was permitted to heal on the Sabbath (12:10). Jesus' response included his counter question (12:11-12a) and his emphatic declaration that "it is permitted to do good on Sabbath" (12:12b). It continues with Jesus commanding the man with a withered hand to stretch his hand (12:13a) and the restoring of the hand to wholeness as the other (12:13b). The story ends with the Pharisees leaving the synagogue to plan how to get rid of Jesus (12:14). The story emphasizes the importance of healing as demonstrated in the chiastic structure above.

Jesus responds to the question of the Pharisees in Matt 12:10 with two questions (12:11-12a). The conditional sentence is a third-class

condition. In third class conditional sentence, the condition implies a sense of contingency (see S. Charlesworth, 2013; Wallace, 1996, pp. 696, 697). The use of the negative interrogative particle οὐκ in the apodosis, suggest a positive answer (see N. Young, 2001, p. 115; Rogers and Rogers, 1998, p. 26). This implies that the fulfillment of the condition was anticipated by the interrogator (N. Young, 2001, p.115). This seems to suggest that, at least from the point of view of Jesus, the owner would rescue the one sheep that fell into the pit on Sabbath. The immediate context of the condition also indicates that the author expected the possible fulfillment of the condition. The logical conclusion drawn from the condition (Matt 12:12b) and the healing of the man with withered hand (12:13), suggest that that interrogator expected possible fulfillment of the condition.

In his first counter question, Jesus asks a hypothetical question to show the importance the Pharisees ought to have attached to human beings. The question suggests that any rational Pharisee would rescue his sheep from the pit on Sabbath (12:11). His second counter question emphasizes the importance of human beings (12:12a). He continues to make a pronouncement on the Sabbath (12:12b). He then commands the man with the withered hand to stretch it. The man obeys and the hand is healed (12:13).

The expression πόσω οὖν διαφέρει ἄνθρωπος προβάτου; alludes to a rabbinic logic (qal wahomer). It is a rabbinic reasoning principle occurring from lesser way to the higher logic (see Clarke, 1999). Jesus alludes to this rabbinic logic to appeal to his opponents that allowing healing on the Sabbath does a higher good compared to what they would have permitted to be done on Sabbath-lifting a sheep from a pit (see Clarke, 1999). Though the healing in 12:13 is not the focus of the pericope, it is significant in the narrative. (a) It signifies the inbreaking of God's kingdom. (b) It also points to Jesus as the promised one, the Messiah, who fulfills the OT and brings God's reign upon his people (like the previous healing miracles of Matt 8 and 9). (c) It displays the authority of Jesus's word and that the healing confirms Jesus's right to the title "Lord of the Sabbath" in Matt 12:8 (see Yang, 1997, 209; Weber, 2000, 1:170-173). Moreover, the healing of the man with the withered hand in 12:13 is significant because it complements Jesus interpretation of the Sabbath law. If God can give Jesus power to heal on the Sabbath, then Jesus's interpretation of the Sabbath law is right. God gives Jesus the power to heal; he also commits to him all things (11:27) including the right interpretation of the Sabbath law (12:3-8; 11-12). If Jesus can heal on the Sabbath; then he can interpret the Sabbath law rightly (see 9:6-7; Mark 2:10-12; Luke 5:22-26). It is

easier for Jesus to give the right interpretation of the Sabbath law than to heal on the Sabbath.

V. Implications

The following implications can be drawn from the analysis of the second Sabbath conflict in Matthew's gospel (12:9-14): It is allowed to do good on the Sabbath. Relieving suffering on the Sabbath is lawful (12:12). Jesus made this point clear in the text. He emphasizes that doing good on the Sabbath is lawful. A major theme of Matthew's gospel is the fulfilment of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; see Hagner, 2012, p. 201). Matthew stresses that in Jesus God's reign has been established on earth (see Matt 3:2, 4:17; 10:7). This already-established kingdom-realised eschatology, would culminate with the consummated eschatology (see Matt 24-25). Jesus healings are evidences of God's inbreaking into the affairs of this world. The healing of the man with the withered hand in Matt 12:9-14 could be seen in this regard.

Christology is a major in Matthew (see Hagner, 2012, p. 202). Jesus's healing of the man with the withered hand in Matt 12:9-14 also has christological nuance. The healing in Matt 12:9-14 points to Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath (see 12:8). As the Lord of the Sabbath he has authority over the exposition of the Sabbath law. After giving his interpretation on the Sabbath law, Jesus did not wait for the Pharisees to acknowledge his interpretation. He went ahead to heal the man with the withered hand. The healing suggests that his authority is decisive. The story assumes that Jesus's interpretation of the Sabbath law is correct since he went ahead to heal the man with the withered hand based on his interpretation.

VI. Summary

The analysis of the second Sabbath conflict periscope in Matthew (12:9-14) has provided some insight into the interpretation of the periscope, which can serve as a model for healing in the Africa. Jesus's rhetorical question appeals the common sense. It is lawful to heal and do good on the Sabbath. God places high value on human beings and their welfare, and that human beings are worth more than sheep. Having investigated that healing of the man whose hand was withered in Matthew, the paper continues to analyse the story in the Synoptic parallels (Mark 3:1-6 and Luke 6:6-11).

A. Jesus' Healing of the Man in Mark

The healing of the man whose hand was withered in the Sabbath conflict in the Gospel of Mark appears significant in Mark's purpose of writing. Each of the gospel writers had a theological interest. This interest is usually hinted in the openings of the gospels (see Stain, 2008). In Mark 1, a fine background is laid for the inherent authority of Jesus. His authority is divinely invested. In v. 1, the author categorically identifies Jesus as the Messiah who is the Son of God. Such an introduction of Jesus seems to sum up the theme of the book. Considering the background of the audience of the gospel of Mark, this theme may have helped affirm their belief that Jesus was divinely appointed to suffer contempt (8:31; 9:12). Aside from this, Jesus had an authority as Messiah and Son of God to perform other divinely appointed functions. In 1:21-22, the teaching of Jesus the son of God was viewed as authoritative plus the power to heal. His teaching is seen as new and authoritative in v. 21-22. This authority associated with his teaching in Mark 1 seems to be a background for healing on the Sabbath in Mark. The healing seems to affirm Jesus' authority as the Messiah and the Son of God who has authority to forgive sin (2:10), interpret the Sabbath law (2:28), and heal on the Sabbath (3:5).

B. Jesus' Healing of the Man in Luke

Luke's interest for adding the man with the withered hand in the Sabbath conflict may be insightful considering the purpose of writing the gospel of Luke. Before the Sabbath conflict episode, the author identifies Jesus five times as the Messiah (2:11, 26; 3:15; 4:41). Luke 5:17 says the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal. In 5:24, Jesus claims that He has authority to forgive sin on earth. In 4:18, He says that the Spirit of God was on him. He was anointed to preach, heal and set the oppressed free. His Messianic consciousness was to preach the kingdom of God (4:43). In his inaugural speech (Luke 4:16-21), Jesus was to "proclaim liberty to the captive" (4:18). Luke's overall concern for the poor, the needy, and the socially marginalized in his gospel seem to portray that the healing of the man was to clarify his mission of proclaiming liberty to the captives (4:18).

C. Jesus' Healing of the Man in Matthew

The healing of the man with the withered hand is to serve in the overarching theme of Matthew. It is messianic. Matthew wrote

(compiled) his gospel about Jesus to project Jesus as the savior of his people from their sins (Matt 1:21). In other words, the mission and the role of Jesus as the Savior is the christological theme of Matthew (see Strecker, 2000; Osborne, 2010). Matthew introduced the 'Emmanuel Christology' (v. 23). Luz (1995) observes that the Emmanuel theme both explicitly and implicitly pervades the entire gospel from 1:23 to 28:20. Matthew 12:9-14 portrays Jesus the Christ. The healing of the man with the withered hand in Matthew portrays Jesus as the anointed Messiah to redeem his people from their sins. It demonstrates the in breaking of the kingdom of heaven of earth. Having established the interpretation of the healing of the man with the withered hand, the paper proceeds to the application in the African context.

VII. Jesus' Healing of the Man in Matthew 12:9-14 as a Model for Ministry in Africa

Africa is faced with health problems (see Ross, 1955, p. 164; The African Reginal Health Report, November 20, 2006; Aikins & Marks, 2007; Manala, 2013; Mutawakilu, 2013; The African Reginal Health Report, 2014; Wiysonge, Oct 9, 2016; Mabuza & Shumba, 2018; Sidibé et al, 2018; Belinga et al, 2018). Diseases such as HIV/AIDS (see Agadjanian & Sem, 2007, p. 362; Van Klinken, 2010, p. 446; Manala, 2013; The African Reginal Health Report, 2014; Mabuza & Shumba, 2018; Sidibé et al, 2018, p. 36; Soubeiga et al, 2018, p. 65) in Western and Southern African countries; Ebola in Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone; cholera; tuberculosis (see Lahaije, March 28, 2018; Gersh et al, 2018, p. 25); and malaria (The African Reginal Health Report, November 20, 2006; The African Reginal Health Report, 2014; Wiysonge, Oct 9, 2016). The 2014 report of the WHO African Office identified HIV/AIDS, malaria, and river blindness as major health problems of the continent. Studies (Kaseje, 2006; Manala, 2013) have shown that African are victims of poor health and short lifespan. Studies (Nganda & Mofokeng, 2001; Cortex, 2005) have also identified healing as a major concern in Africa. Africans aspire to good health (Manala, 2013) since good health is equated to life in most African communities (see Osei, 2003, p. 168; Moila, 2012, p. 21; Manala, 2013). In the context of health and wellbeing in Africa, Jesus' healing of the man in Matt 12:9-14 could serve as a model for healing and provision of health facilities in Africa by the church. Studies (The Africa Health Strategy, 2007-2015; Magezi, 2018) have identified the need for health education in Africa. For example, The Africa Health Strategy (2007-2015) decried lack of programs to empower the people

in Africa to participate in health. The study (The Africa Health Strategy, 2007-2015) identified cultural factors as a hindrance to equipping people of Africa health education.

Jesus' healing has left an example for the church in Africa to emulate. Jesus' example is normative for Christians. Jesus considered the need for health a priority in his ministry (see Cortex, 2005, p. 72). The narrative of Matt 12:9-14 implies that Jesus sought to restore the sick to health. Whilst the healings in the Gospel of Matthew portray Jesus as God's appointed Messiah for the salvation of mankind (see Fuller, 2001, pp. 68-69), lessons from Jesus' healing of the sick should not be ignored. Jesus' attitude toward the sick should be a lesson for Christians today. He went against every obstacle to heal the sick. The church must emulate Christ in providing healing to the sick in society. The church ought to ensure that the healing ministry is given a priority in Africa. Health ministries in Africa would draw African to learn about Jesus, the center of Christianity.

Thus, contemporary Christian church organizations in Africa ought to emulate Jesus in providing healing ministries to the sick. The church can educate Africans about healthy practices like good hygiene and general preventive health practices. The church can also provide health facilities in the African communities to provide curative services to the African people. The health education and health facilities in Africa would help prolong the relatively short lifespan of African (see Kaseje, 2006; Manala, 2013). Africans could also experience good health and contribute meaningfully towards their personal and communal development.

The church has contributed toward providing solutions to African health problems (see Ross, 1955, p. 164; Cortex, 2005, p. 72; Kaseje, 2006; Synod of Bishops, 2006; Mkandawire, 2009, pp. 62-63; Manala, 2013; Holt, Clark, and Roth, 2014, p. 311; Olivier, et al, 2015; Lahaije, 2018; Magezi, 2018). For example, Studies have shown that the church in Africa has contributed to the psychological, practical, and spiritual health interventions in Africa (see Foster, 2010; Samuel, Geibel & Perry, 2010; Babbel, 2012; Dambisya & Ichoku, 2012; Magezi, 2012; Magezi, 2018). Studies (Hill et al, 2007; Holt et al, 2009) have also confirmed a positive correlation between religious practice and healthy lifestyle. The studies (Hill et al, 2007; Holt et al, 2009) concluded that people who are more religious enjoy healthy lifestyles than those who are less religious. These studies should motivate the church in Africa to strengthen its education of congregants and the wider African society. The church should admonish its members to live Christian lifestyles to enjoy long lifespan in Africa.

Other studies (see Samuels et al., 2010; Mati, 2013; Magezi, 2018) have revealed that the healthcare potentials of the church in Africa have been underutilized. The church in Africa should put their healthcare service potentials into maximum use. They could partner with African governments to provide preventive and curative healthcare in African communities. The church in Africa should promote healthy practices such as periodic screening, physical activity, diet, and weight control. The church should also educate members and the general public to avoid illicit sexual activity, smoking, and other illicit drugs that can be detrimental to individual and public health (see Koenig et al, 2012). The church should also reorient its theology to prevent negative religious coping (see Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2001), which is detrimental to health (see Holt, Clark, & Roth, 2014).

The social diffusion effect (see Crossman, 2012) of health education of Africans in church and wider society, has the potential of improving the lifespan of African (see Magezi, 2018). Crossman (2012) explained that practices can be transmitted from one culture to another. When members of congregations lead a healthier lifestyle, it has the potential of improving the general health of the community as others emulate the good examples of the congregants in the community. Magezi (2018) attests to the improved health living in society due to the influence of the members of Salvation Army in selected African societies (like Kenya) where they live.

The church should endeavor to counter the possible negative correlation between religious involvement and impact on health (see Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2001; Exline, 2002; Mitchell, Lannin, Mathews, & Swanson, 2002; Pargament, 2002; Holt, Clark, & Roth, 2014). The church should counter activities of some Christian organization that seem detrimental to health and wellbeing in Africa (see Cortez, 2005; Holt, Clark, and Roth, 2014, p. 311). For instance, the church should counter some religious teachings that consider sicknesses like cancer and HIV/AIDS as punishment from God (see Burker, Evon, Sedway, & Egan, 2005; Degner, Hack, O'Neil, & Kristianson, 2003; Eidinger & Schapira, 1984; Luker, Beaver, Leinster, & Owens, 1996; Springer, 1994; Crawford, Allison, Robinson, Hughes, & Samaryk, 1992; Kaldjian, Jekel, & Friedman, 1998; Klonoff & Landrine, 1994; Kopelman, 2002; Neylan, Nelson, Schauf, & Schollard, 1998). Thus, the church in Africa could play a significant role in promoting good health and long lifespan in Africa through preventive and curative healthcare.

The synoptic parallels of second Sabbath conflicts (Mark 3:1-6; and Luke 6:6-11) have revealed similarities with the Sabbath conflict in

Matthew's gospel in relation to health (Matt 12:9-14). Jesus regarded the health of human beings as of utmost importance in his ministry. Jesus' actions and ministry are normative for Christians. The church in Africa should educate its members and the general public to engage in healthy practices such as periodic screening, physical activity, diet, and weight control. The church should also educate members and the general public to avoid illicit sexual activity, smoking, and other illicit drugs that can be detrimental to individual and public health.

VII. Conclusion

On the strength of the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn regarding how the exegetical analysis of Matt 12:9-14 to serve as the model for healing in Africa: Jesus placed high value on human health. The church in Africa ought to emulate Jesus' example, and endeavor to promote good health of society. To ensure that the church provide health in Africa, the following are recommended: (1) that churches embark on periodic and sustained health education in their communities; (2) that churches establish clinics, hospitals, and sanitariums to provide preventive and curative health ministries to their communities; and (3) that members are encouraged to adopt good healthy living to serve as good examples to their communities. Thus, the church ought to be the hand of Christ in providing health and healing in Africa.

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