Research: Healing of the leper

Matt. 8:2,3

2And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

**Worshipped** in Greek is *proskyneo* which means “to kiss the hand in token of reverence; to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence; to make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication.”

“Leprosy has always been, and is still, one of the most intractable diseases. Under the Mosaic Law lepers were regarded as unclean and excluded entirely from human society: see Lev. 13 and 14” (Dummelow 642).

“Whatever variety of skin disorder the man had, it caused him much suffering. This suffering was social as well as physical. The law required that ‘the person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp (Lev. 13:45-46). Instead of keeping his distance from Jesus, as the law demanded, the leper came directly to him and fell down on his knees to make his plea. He had no doubt that Jesus could heal him. He only wondered whether Jesus was willing” (*EBC* 8.630).

“He does not say he believed him able, but with a brevity expressive of a confidence that knew no doubt he says simply, ‘thou canst’. But of Christ’s willingness to heal him he was not so sure” (Jamieson 3.51).

3And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

**Put forth his hand** is *ekteino* in Greek which means “to stretch out, extend.”

**Touch** in Greek is *haptomai* which means “fasten one’s self to, adhere, cling to, touch”

The fact that Jesus touched the leper was remarkable, since lepers were regarded as outcasts and the disease was believed to be highly contagious. Lepers were required to announce their approach by crying out. Jesus did not shun the man but, contrary to popularly accepted patterns of social and religious behavior, reached out and touched him and healed him.

“No one was allowed to touch or even to salute a leper. If he even put his head into a place it became unclean. No less a distance than 4 cubits (6 ft.) had to be kept from the leper, or if the wind came from that direction, 100 cubits were scarcely sufficient. By thus touching the leper, Christ also showed his superiority to the Law of Moses” (Dummelow 652).

“Jesus’ touching of the leper not only resulted in his being cured, but also revealed Jesus’ attitude toward the ceremonial law. He boldly placed love and compassion over ritual and regulation” (*EBC* 8.630).

“It was an offence to the Jews to *touch* a leprous person, and was regarded as making him who did it ceremonially impure. The act of putting forth his hand and *touching* him, therefore, expressed the intention of Jesus to cure him, and was a pledge that he was, in fact, already cured” (Barnes 57).

“And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed—as perfectly as instantaneously” (Jamieson 3.52).

“*Cleansed* in Greek is *katharizo* which means to make clean; from physical stains and dirt; in a moral sense; to free from the defilement of sin and from faults; to purify from wickedness; to free from the guilt of sin, to purify; to consecrate by cleansing or purifying” (Thayer 312).