

SABBATH HEALINGS "A Planting of the Lord"

The next chronological Sabbath in the Gospels from the day that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever is found in Luke 6 (and Matt. 12 and Mark 2).

Luke 6:1-5

- 1 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels.
- 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"
- 3 Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?"
- 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."
- 5 Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." (NIV)

Lest we should forget, the Lord Jesus is Lord over the Sabbath. He it is who will reign gloriously on earth for 1,000 years.

Rev 20:4

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (NIV)

Luke 6:6-11 (NIV)

- 6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose **right¹ hand was shriveled²**.
- 7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.
- 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.
- 9 Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"
- 10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored.
- 11 But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

When we studied "The Daughter of Abraham Set Free", we looked at a woman who had been penned in, kept from water. When we studied "Out of the Pit", we examined a man who had dropsy. His problem was water retention [Liver used in sacrifice. Insufficient worship? Didn't let the water flow?]. He kept water. Here in Luke 6 [the first parabolic Sabbath healing - Matt. 12] we have a man who has a shriveled hand. It has withered. He has been cut off from water.

By now, I trust, we have seen that the healing of physical ailments can teach us many spiritual truths. The man's hand was withered, not his foot or shoulder or neck. It was his hand. What

does the hand symbolize in Scripture? Many things, among them:

Possession, ownership-

John 10:27-30

27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and the Father are one." (NIV)

Works and deeds-

Ps 90:17

And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it. (KJV)

Worship-

1 Tim 2:8

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. (NIV)

Ps 134:2 "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD." (NIV)

But it wasn't simply a shriveled hand. It was his right hand that was shriveled. The right hand has specific significance in scripture.

The Lord's right hand works mightily for his people, Ps. 118:15-16 tells us [Shouts of joy and victory . . .]. His right hand saves his people, we are informed in Ps. 17:7 and 98:1. And it is his right hand that protects his people (Ps. 16:8).

Ps 121:5-8

5 The LORD watches over you-- the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD will keep you from all harm-- he will watch over your life;

8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. (NIV)

The right hand is the hand of blessing. When Joseph brought his sons to Israel for him to bless them, he placed Manasseh, the eldest, in line with Israel's right hand and Ephraim he put to the left, for he was the younger of the two. But Israel crossed his arms over them and blessed the boys.

Gen 48:17-19

17 When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

18 Joseph said to him, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations." (NIV)

Matt 25:33-34

33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (NIV)

The right hand is also the hand of fellowship. When Barnabas and Paul went to Jerusalem, Peter, James, and John gave them the "right hand of fellowship."

The right hand is not only the hand of blessing and fellowship, but also the hand of power and authority.

Acts 2:33-36

33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand

35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." ' "

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (NIV)

Eph 1:20-23

20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,

23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (NIV)

Most uses of "right hand" in the Old Testament deal with the salvation of God. Most uses of "right hand" in the New Testament deal with Jesus being on the right hand of God. It seems to me to be very symmetrical, because Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God after the accomplishment of our salvation (Heb. 12:2).

Now, this man's right hand, the hand of blessing, fellowship, power and authority, was withered, dried up, shriveled. Clearly, he had a physical ailment. But what can cause withering in the spiritual realm of life?

Proverbs 17:22 tells us that a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Matthew 13:5-6; 20-21 in the parable of the sower and the seed tells us that those planted on rocky ground are those who receive the word with joy, but have no root. When the heat of persecution came, they withered. The Lord tells us in John 15:6 that those who do not remain in him are like branches thrown out that wither and are later picked up for the fire.

Isa 30:1-5

- 1 "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin;
- 2 who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge.
- 3 But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame, Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace.
- 4 Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes,
- 5 everyone will be **put to shame** because of a people useless to them, who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace." (NIV)

Trusting in the flesh causes withering. The word for shame is the same as the word for withering in the Hebrew. Remember that the Lord was to be their shade on their right hand. But they trusted in Egypt, and thus they withered.

Jer 50:38

A drought on her waters! They will **dry up**. For it is a land of idols, idols that will go mad with terror. (NIV)

Babylon is given a drought because of her idols. Idolatry causes withering. Withering can also be the result of a curse.

Mark 11:14; 20-21

- 14 Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.
- 20 In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.
- 21 Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"(NIV)

Jer 23:10

The land is full of adulterers; because of the curse the land lies parched and the pastures in the desert are **withered**. The [prophets] follow an evil course and use their power unjustly. (NIV)

Jeremiah 23 also points to another cause of withering, the wrongful use of authority. The prophets were using their power unjustly.

IKing 13:1-6

- 1 By the word of the LORD a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering.
- 2 He cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD: "O altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'"
- 3 That same day the man of God gave a sign: "This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out."
- 4 When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Seize him!" But the hand he stretched out

toward the man **shriveled up**, so that he could not pull it back.

5 Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD.

6 Then the king said to the man of God, "Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored." So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before. (NIV)

Not only was there a wrong use of authority, but idolatry spawned from a need to control and dominate people was also involved. The man interceded with God for Jeroboam and his hand was restored.

Not only is the wrongful use of authority a cause of withering, but also the lack of use. Dereliction of duty can cause withering and blindness.

Zech 11:17

"Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!" (NIV)

Matt 12:11

He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it *falls* into a **pit³** on the Sabbath, will you not **take hold of it⁴** and **lift it out⁵**? (NIV)

Matthew 12:1 is why I refer to this healing as a parabolic healing. In relation to this man's ailment, Jesus tells the parable of the sheep falling into the pit. He calls this man a sheep. We all know the imagery that that term carries. This man was a follower, an Israelite, and he had fallen into a pit. The word in the Greek [bathunos] which is translated "pit" is only used two other places in the New Testament.

Matt 15:12-14 (NIV)

12 Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

13 He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.

14 Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a **pit³**."

If something is plucked up by the roots, it must wither. In the above verse we have blind guides withering and falling into dry ditches. The other place it is used is in the companion scripture in Luke 6:39. [The amazing thing is that it shows up right in Luke 6!] Withering can result from a curse and Deuteronomy 27:18 states that there is a curse on people who lead the blind astray. And in Matthew and Luke we have the blind leading the blind into a ditch.

Jer 2:11-13

11 Has a nation ever changed its gods? (Yet they are not gods at all.) But my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols.

12 Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the LORD.

13 "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and

have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. (NIV)

The worship of idols brings on the curse of shame and withering. This exchange of the living God for idols, the Lord compares to the forsaking of the spring of living water for a dry, broken cistern (pit or ditch).

Let us reexamine our scene from Luke, Mark, and Matthew's perspectives combined:

After proclaiming himself the Lord of the Sabbath to the Pharisees in the field, he ventures into their synagogue. They are watching him closely, to see if he will heal on the Sabbath day. To be sure the opportunity exists, a man with a withered hand is directed to be there, bait for their trap of jealousy.

Jesus knows their thoughts. The intent of their hearts is evident to him. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" they ask him.

"Get up and stand in front of everybody," he tells the man. "Which is lawful on the Sabbath," he asks, "to do good or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?"

They remain silent; watching, waiting, wanting to accuse him. Always reaching out, always teaching, Jesus continues.

"If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on a Sabbath, would you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath!"

Still, no reply. Silence in the synagogue. They sit and stare and cry with rage in their hearts, "You've said it, now do it. Perform your work that we might bring formal charges against you."

Jesus looks about him, examining the faces of these hardened, blind men. Standing out in front of them is the lone sheep, dangled before the Lord as the bait to their hook. It angers him. Their callousness grieves his heart. "Stretch forth your hand," he commands the man. The obedient sheep hears his Master's voice. He stretches out his right hand and it is restored, whole as the other. On a Sabbath day, the Lord pulled him out of the pit he had fallen into.

What manner of pits are there to fall into? There is the pit of pride described in 1 Timothy 3:6-7. There is the pit of temptation and trap of greed spoken about in 1 Timothy 6:9. And the most fearsome of them all is the pit of God's judgment. As Hebrews 10:31 states, "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." How are we to avoid falling into these pits?

The Lord said that the owner of the sheep would take hold of it and lift it out. If we keep a hold, we may avoid the pitfalls altogether. We are directed in the word to hold the head (Christ) [Col. 2:18-19]. We are told to hold to the teachings passed onto us [2 Thes. 2:15-17] and to the faith which we profess [Heb. 6:18-20]. As we hold to his name [Rev. 2:13] and to the spiritual treasures that we have [Rev. 3:11], we take hold of the hope which ushers us into the holy of holies where Jesus stands as High Priest, interceding with the Father for all of our shriveled members [Heb. 6:18-20].

Should we fail and fall, it is the Lord who takes hold of us and lifts us out. The Greek word for "lift him out" in Matt. 12:11 is egeiro. Its predominate use in the New Testament refers to the raising of the dead, both the resurrection of Jesus and those he raises. It is the same word Jesus used when in Luke 6:8 he told the man to "get up." Do you see the Shepherd's heart, to raise one

who had been led astray out of the dry cistern of blind leadership and false worship into the life of his kingdom on the Sabbath day? Praise God!

What he did next is no less significant.

Luke 6:12-16

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:

14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,

15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot,

16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. (NIV)

On the heels of this healing, he chooses the twelve after a full night's prayer.

They reign in the kingdom-

Matt 19:27-28

27 Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

28 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (NIV)

They are a foundation of the church-

Eph 2:19-22

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (NIV)

And the New Jerusalem-

Rev 21:10-14

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.

14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (NIV)

We are to be a planting of the Lord-

Ps 1:1-3

- 1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. (NIV)

Isa 56:3-7

- 3 Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely exclude me from his people." And let not any eunuch complain, "I am only a dry tree."
- 4 For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant--
- 5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off.
- 6 And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant--
- 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." (NIV)

The above corresponds to Rev. 3:7-13!