

# Luke Chapter 5

Here in this chapter, we have the record of four distinct incidents in the life of the Lord Jesus:

1. The miraculous draught of fishes
2. The healing of the leper
3. The healing of the man with the palsy
4. The call of Levi
5. Questions for the Lord Jesus

At first sight, there would appear to be very little connection between these four events. But we must look for a common thread running through them all, for in the gospels, as indeed anywhere else in the Bible, there is no such thing as a loose fragmented collection of isolated events. What then is the common bond between these four incidents?

The answer lies, I believe, in the last four verses of the chapter, from verse 36 to 39. There is a contrast made between the old and the new. The old garment would be ruined by sewing on a piece of new cloth as the patch; the old bottle would burst if it were filled with new wine. Certainly there is always a great reluctance to change the old for the new. Thus the Lord concludes with the words, "The old is better". The "old" and the "new" in this chapter would represent the contrast between the law of Moses and the gospel of grace. The old ways under law are being contrasted with the new ways of the gospel. The two cannot mix,, and despite the desire of the Jews to hold on to the old, the law must eventually give way to the ways of grace..

This then is the common link between the four main events of the chapter. There are other topics too of course. All through the chapter, we see examples of the power and deity of the Lord Jesus. We see also the appeals that are being made to the Jews to accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. The evidence is being laid before them,

Let us now consider each incident in turn:

## 1. The miraculous draught of fishes

The Lord is standing by the lake of Gennesaret, better known to us as the sea of Galilee. The people are pressing in upon Him to hear the word of God. He decides to enter into one of the ships that are by the lake. Having finished speaking, He says to Simon, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught".

Before we continue further, we should note that Luke describes this catch of fish as part of a sequence of miracles that is taken out of its true historical order. If we take Mark as giving us the true historical order, we note the following sequence:

- **The call of Peter & Andrew, James & John**
- The man with the unclean spirit

- Peter's mother –in-law healed
- The leper cleansed
- The palsied man healed
- The call of Levi

Here in Luke, the order is:

- The man with the unclean spirit
- Peter's mother-in-law healed
- **The draught of fishes**
- **The call of the Peter, James, and John**
- The leper cleansed
- The palsied man healed
- The call of Levi

Only Luke of the four gospel writers describes this first catch of fish. The catch described in John chapter 21 takes place after His resurrection. In Mark, the call of the four disciples takes place before any of the miracles while in Luke, three miracles are described first before the call of the disciples.

We have already seen in Luke how often he presents things in a different order from what happened historically. Thus in chapter 3, John is shut up in prison but in the very next verse, the Lord is baptized – obviously by John. In chapter 4, Luke puts the incident on the pinnacle of the temple last, while Matthew puts it second. Luke is giving us a moral order of things.

What is the lesson of the miraculous catch? Could the fruitless efforts of the previous night be underlining the contrast between the vain toiling of men under the law, while under the Lord's direction in the day of grace, a great haul is gathered in?

It has often been pointed out that the Lord's instruction was to let down the nets (plural), whereas Peter let down his net (singular). Had they fully complied with His instruction, the catch might have been even bigger. We also note that this would appear to be the second time that these four men had met the Lord. the first time being recorded for us in John chapter 1, when Andrew and John left the Baptist to follow Jesus, and when Andrew went and fetched his brother Peter. There was a call to follow Him, followed at some later date, by the call to service.

So great was the catch that the net broke, hence they had to call their partners James and John to help them. Even then, both ships began to sink. The miracle displayed the miraculous powers of the Lord Jesus. It had an immediate effect upon Peter, who fell at the knees of the Lord Jesus and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, o Lord". Peter felt his own failure in the light of the power of Christ. But the Lord calls all four men to follow Him and to catch men. They left all and followed Him. They left behind a good business for they were in partnership together. Peter left behind him his wife and his mother-in-law. And who were they following? - a homeless stranger who promised them nothing as far as this world was concerned.

## 2. The healing of the leper

We find this miracle between verses 13 and 15. Leprosy is often used in scripture to describe sin. It is sin in all its loathsomeness. It is unclean, it is progressive, it was usually fatal, it separated its victims from both God and men. Doctor Luke records the fact that this man was "full of leprosy" – he was beyond all human help. But we can say two things about him. He fell on his face before the Lord in an act of homage and of worship. His request also showed his faith - "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He called Jesus his Lord. He had no doubt as to the Lord's ability to heal him. He said rather, "If Thou wilt". It was not a question of the Lord's ability – only His will to do so. Verse 13 describes the Lord's response:

13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

The Lord not only spoke to him. He **touched** him. Since the day he had been pronounced leprous, no one would have deliberately laid a hand upon Him, but now he had met a man who not only touched him, but also had compassion upon him according to Mark chapter 1:

Mr 1:41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

In verse 14, the Lord tells the man to go and show himself to the priest:

14 And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

In the law of God, He commanded certain things which the leper had to bring to the tabernacle once he had been pronounced clean. Leviticus 14 tells us of the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing.

4 Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:

10 And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil.

He had to bring two birds, two he lambs, and one ewe lamb to the priest. Very detailed instructions are given in the chapter, and the priest was witness to all these things. But I do not recall any time when these instructions were ever carried out. For this to happen, a leper would needed to have been healed. The Lord in chapter 4 reminded the men of Nazareth that in the days of Elisha, a leper had been cleansed but he was not a Jew – he was Naaman the Syrian. He would not have gone to the priest to present his offerings for he was a gentile. So it is a reasonable assumption to make that the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing had never been carried out. Had it been done, it would have been a proof to the Jews that God was working amongst His people.

Only God could heal the leper. When Naaman turned up at the door of the king of Israel, the king rent his clothes and cried:

"Am I God to kill and make alive, that one should send unto me to cure a man

of his leprosy". He thought that the king of Syria was deliberately picking a quarrel with him to provoke a war. Only God could heal the leper. Luke 5 tells us that God was indeed amongst His people in the person of the Lord Jesus. The priest would have known this when the leper came with his offerings.

If the cleansing of this one leper would have been a testimony to the priest, think of the day, described for us in Luke chapter 17, when ten lepers were cleansed. The priest should have known that God was visiting His people.

As a result of this miracle there went out a fame of Him abroad, and great multitudes came to hear Him and to be healed. The Lord responds however in what might seem to be a strange manner. Just when it seems that everything is going well, "He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed."

Some over the years have perished on the rock of popularity but not so the Lord Jesus. He did not move at the beck and call of men. The time of prayer was a time to get fresh instruction from God His Father.

### **3. The healing of the man with the palsy**

Verses 17 to 26 deal with another miracle, the healing of the palsied or paralysed man. We know the story well. Four friends bring a palsied man to the Lord for healing, but when they arrive at the house, they cannot enter because of the multitudes. So they go up on to the roof, break open the tiles, and let their friend down into the room where Jesus was.

The initial response of the Lord Jesus takes them all by surprise.

20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

He saw the faith, not in the palsied man, but in his friends. They were so convinced that the Lord could heal their friend that they went to such great lengths to bring him to the Lord Jesus. But it was the Lord's words to the man that really surprised them:

Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

The Lord knew what no other man present could have known, that this man's condition was due to his sins. The man was under the judgment of God. So too were some that Paul writes about in I Corinthians chapter 11.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

The scribes and Pharisees who were present asked the question within their hearts:

**Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?**

They were correct in one sense for who indeed can forgive sins but God? Only God can forgive because it is against God that we have sinned. David confessed his sin to God in Psalm 51:

Ps 51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

The prodigal son also said in Luke 15 on his way home:

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

For any other man to forgive sins is indeed blasphemy, but along with the cleansing of the leper, it is yet another proof of the deity of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord then does heal the man but He uses the miracle as proof that He had the power on earth to forgive sins.

#### **4. The call of Levi**

We have had the call of four of the disciples already in this chapter. These four were fishermen, which was at least an honourable occupation. But here we have the call of a tax-collector – a job which was despised by the Jews. Not only were they collecting taxes for the Romans, the army of occupation, but the publicans were well known for their corruption.

When you think of the name Levi, you think of the Levites whose privilege was to take tithes of the people of Israel. This man Levi was taking taxes and giving them to the Romans.

Levi invites the Lord to a feast in his house. The house is filled with his friends. The scribes and Pharisees murmur against His disciples:

Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

The Lord replies:

They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

#### **5. Questions for the Lord Jesus**

33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?