

The Promise of Calvary

"When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases'" (Matthew 8:16-17). These otherwise not so unusual events in Jesus' ministry are made more interesting by Matthew's interpretation of them as fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, understood by other New Testament authors as a reference to the work Jesus did at Calvary (Acts 8:32-39; 1 Peter 2:21-25 with Isaiah 53). Matthew suggests the work of Christ not only affected spiritual healing, but physical healing! Not only was delivery from sin made possible at the cross, so was delivery from sickness—Jesus brings complete healing.

The trouble is we still see sin and sickness, even in the most faithful disciples of Jesus. Although sin is usually voluntary, sickness is not (save that which sometimes results from voluntary foolishness), and this may raise questions about Isaiah's prophecy and Matthew's interpretation of it. However, the promise of Calvary is wrapped up not only in what is, but also in what will be. Those who have experienced the new birth into Christ are delivered from the punishment and power of sin in a spiritual relationship with the Lord (Romans 6). Nevertheless, a time waits for those born again spiritually to be born again physically (Romans 8). In the glory of the resurrection, when Jesus comes again, the full effect of Isaiah's prophecy will be realized—both sin and sickness will be no more. The promise of Calvary will be the possession of every believer.