

Matthew 11:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Analysis

Jesus's response to John the Baptist's inquiry uses prophetic fulfillment as evidence: 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' This catalogue directly echoes Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1, messianic prophecies John would immediately recognize. Jesus doesn't merely assert His identity—He points to objective evidence fulfilling specific Old Testament predictions. The order is significant: physical healings culminate in spiritual transformation ('poor have the gospel preached'). Reformed theology sees the miracles as signs authenticating the message; the ultimate work is gospel proclamation transforming hearts. The raising of the dead demonstrates Christ's power over humanity's last enemy. The inclusion of 'poor' emphasizes that salvation comes to those recognizing their spiritual bankruptcy (Matthew 5:3), not the self-righteous.

Historical Context

John the Baptist, imprisoned by Herod Antipas for condemning his unlawful marriage to Herodias (Matthew 14:3-4), sent disciples asking 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?' (11:3). John's question likely arose from confusion: he expected Messiah to bring judgment (Matthew 3:10-12), yet Jesus's ministry emphasized mercy. From prison, unable to witness Jesus's ministry directly, John sought confirmation. Jesus's response directed John's disciples to

report what they saw—eyewitness testimony of messianic credentials. The miracles Jesus referenced had occurred throughout His Galilean ministry (chapters 8-9). Isaiah's prophecies were universally recognized as messianic in Jewish interpretation, so Jesus's claim was unmistakable. The episode reveals the early church's honesty—they recorded even John the Baptist's momentary uncertainty, demonstrating the gospel accounts' credibility.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's method of pointing to evidence rather than demanding blind faith inform Christian apologetics today?
2. What does John's question from prison teach about how circumstances can cloud our spiritual sight even for godly people?
3. Why is the preaching of the gospel to the poor listed as climactic evidence alongside physical miracles?

Interlinear Text

τυφλοὶ	ἀναβλέπουσιν	καὶ	χωλοὶ	περιπατοῦσιν	λεπροὶ
The blind	receive their sight	and	the lame	walk	the lepers
G5185	G308	G2532	G5560	G4043	G3015
καθαρίζονται	καὶ	κωφοὶ	ἀκούουσιν	νεκροὶ	ἐγείρονται
are cleansed	and	the deaf	hear	the dead	are raised up
G2511	G2532	G2974	G191	G3498	G1453
καὶ	πτωχοὶ	εὐαγγελίζονται·			
and	the poor	have the gospel preached to them			
G2532	G4434	G2097			

Additional Cross-References

Luke 4:18 (Parallel theme): The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Isaiah 29:18 (Parallel theme): And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

James 2:5 (Parallel theme): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Matthew 21:14 (Parallel theme): And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

John 10:38 (Parallel theme): But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

John 5:36 (Parallel theme): But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

John 10:25 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

