

(50) Epileptic Healed (Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-42)

1. This event features the inability of the disciples to cast out a demon and provide for the healing of an individual.
 - a. It also provides the most thorough and descriptive account for in-depth studies on demonology.
 - b. The title for this episode is unfortunate as the demonization of the youth has nothing to do with epilepsy.
2. While Jesus, Peter, James and John were up on the mount of transfiguration, Andrew and the remaining disciples encountered a spiritual battle of their own.
 - a. A demon resistant to their casting out.
 - b. Scribes resistant to their teaching.
3. Like the Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt. 15:22), the father of the demoniac boy makes his appeal on the basis of mercy (Matt. 17:15).
4. The son.
 - a. Called a son (υἱός huios ^{#5207}_{377x}) (Mt. 17:15; Mk. 9:17; Lk. 9:38) the only-begotten (μονογενής monogenēs ^{#3439}_{9x}) (Lk. 9:38). Called a boy (παῖς pais ^{#3816}_{24x} Mt. 17:18; Lk. 9:42), (παιδίον paidion ^{#3813}_{52x} Mk. 9:24).
 - b. Matthew's details (Mt. 17:15).
 - 1) He is a lunatic (moonstruck). σεληνιαζομαι selēniazomai ^{#4583}_{2x}; *to experience epileptic seizures* (Mt. 4:24; 17:15); from σελήνη selēnē ^{#4582}_{9x}; *moon*. The construction is similar to the demonized/afflicted by a demon concept.
 - a) Cat(alogus) Cod(icum) Astr(ologorum Graecorum)/CCAG, 12 vols. 1898–1953 mentions demoniacs, epileptics, and seleniacs (CCAG IX/2 p.156, 10f).
 - b) Classical Greek recognized epilepsy and had numerous word forms for it: ἐπιληπτεύομαι epilēpteuomai, ἐπιληπτίζω epilēptizō, ἐπιληπτικός epilēptikos, and ἐπιληπτος epilēptos.
 - (1) These terms are well attested by Hippocrates (v. BC), Agathinus (i. AD), and Galenus (ii. AD). The LXX uses ἐπιληπτος epilēptos in 1st Sam. 21:15(16).
 - (2) An interesting account of the treatment of epilepsy by Rufus of Ephesus in the second century a.d. indicates a purely physical understanding of both cause and treatment.
 - c) The English “lunatic” corresponds to the moon (Latin *lunaticus*) and is preferable to epileptic medical terminology.
 - 2) He is very ill (κακῶς πάσχει kakōs paschei). Suffers severely (cf. Matt. 15:22).
 - 3) Often falls into both fire and water. While epilepsy is one cause for such seizures, it is not the only cause, and the Bible presents this case as spiritual rather than medical (Matt. 17:18).
 - c. Mark's details (Mk. 9:17-18).
 - 1) Possessed with a spirit (Mk. 9:17). ἔχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλαλον echonta pneuma alalon Lit. *having a mute spirit*.
 - 2) The spirit “seizes” him. καταλαμβάνω katalambanō ^{#2638}_{15x} (Mk. 9:18; Jn. 8:3-4; 12:35; Phil. 3:12_{x2},13; 1st Thess. 5:4).
 - 3) Throws him down, foams (at the mouth), grinds his teeth, and withers away.
 - d. Luke's details (Lk. 9:39) largely agree with Mark's but provide a more medically oriented commentary.
5. The disciples.
 - a. The disciples had previously been given authority to cast out demons and heal the sick (Matt. 10:1).
 - b. They were unsuccessful in this instance (Mt. 17:16; Mk. 9:18b; Lk. 9:40).
6. The frustration.
 - a. Jesus becomes frustrated by His unbelieving and perverted generation.
 - b. His ministry towards them was one of “putting up with” them.
7. The expulsion.
 - a. Jesus uses the expulsion episode to provide instruction on faith to the boy's father (Mk. 9:22-24) and ultimately the disciples (Mt. 17:20).
 - b. All things are possible to him who believes (Mk. 9:23).
 - c. Present faith still needs help in order to prevent unbelief from regaining control (Mk. 9:24; Rom. 4:19-20).
8. The explanation. Two reasons are given for the disciples failed efforts:
 - a. Littleness of their faith (Mt. 17:20 cf. 21:21-22). ὀλιγοπιστία oligopistia ^{#570}_{Ηαp.}.
 - b. Failure to pray (Mt. 17:21 ☞; Mk. 9:27).
 - c. “This kind” of demon supplies a remarkable observation regarding spiritual genera.