# Jesus met a Hunchback Woman

Luke 13:10-17 #160

There was a woman who for 18 long years was bent double. She could not straighten up at all. She lived in a town in Israel in Jesus’ day. Every Sabbath day she used to go to the Synagogue to worship. She hated going there because everyone looked down on her. She bent low, her status was low, and her spirit was low. She was a poor unfortunate, hopeless woman.

One Sabbath day Jesus from Nazareth was the guest speaker. He was making the headlines with His miracle working powers and teaching about the kingdom of God. The synagogue ruler was taking a risk inviting Him because back in His hometown synagogue He had read a passage from the book of Isaiah about the coming Messiah, who would release the oppressed by the power of God.[[1]](#footnote-2) Then He made the claim that He was that very Messiah. When He reminded them that God had sometimes favoured pagan foreigners over Jews they ran Him out of town. The town rulers knew about this incident but invited Jesus anyway, probably hoping for a full house, and they were not disappointed.

The elders and rulers also expect Messiah, and when He did come they expected they would be His elite men. They never imagined this Jesus could be the Messiah. His family were low class. His hometown of Nazareth was small and rural. They knew Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. But they forgot that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. 30 years ago, His mother and step-father had to travel to Bethlehem for a Roman census. Mary was heavy with child. Their first son was born there. They named Him Jesus but brought Him up in Nazareth.

Here was this same Jesus, 30 years later, guest speaker at the synagogue. Our bent-over women went as usual to the ladies’ side, down the back. Elders and dignitaries sat on their raised benches. These men were also the civil authorities of that community, the magistrates, and the police. Above them, in the seat of honour, sat the ruler and attendant of the synagogue.

All eyes are on Jesus as He speaks. He gazes round and His eyes meet with that hunchback woman. His face is filled with compassion, for her! He calls her over to Him. She is shocked. But He speaks with authority and warmth. She stands, bent over as she is, and shuffles to the front. She is feeling over exposed here. All eyes are on her. He calls her to stand beside Him. This is a break with convention here. Jesus is the one invited by the ruler to occupy the front platform. Yet He shares it with this woman, a despised, oppressed reject of society. She suddenly finds herself sharing the speaker’s platform up front. She is confused.

Jesus speaks to her in everyone’s hearing**. “Woman, you are freed from your sickness”.** He must be joking. She is a hunchback, oppressed by Satan for 18 long years. This is a claim to be Messiah. He is making a fool of Himself, and a fool out of her …. if nothing happens. He doesn’t call on anyone else’s name – not even God. For a moment, He has made the command, but she is still stooped over. Tension mounts. The authorities lean forward. It’s showdown. He calls on two witnesses.

Firstly, Himself. He lays His hands on her.

Secondly, her body. She feels a warm peace through her body and a surge of strength down her back. She straightens her spine and she stands erect, healed, and delivered for the first time in 18 years!

She is flooded with joy. She is in no doubt that the One who has just healed her is Messiah from God. She thanks Him and starts praising Him. She worships God and glorifies Him for His power and healing in her. Quickly she goes from a stooped reject down the back to a blessed, straightened, vocal worshipper up front. Jesus stands there receiving her worship of Him as Messiah, as God. Her joy is infectious. Others join in. They start clapping and singing praise to God.

The ruler, the attendant and the elite are in shock. This is not on their agenda. They haven’t been consulted about this. They are the guardians of the law and traditions and when Messiah does reveal Himself it will be through their courts of authority. But what is happening here is not under their control. Spontaneous worship – out of order!

The ruler doesn’t dare confront Him directly. Jesus will be out of town shortly. The ruler’s concern is the crowd, his crowd, and his position of authority. She is so overwhelmed with joy and worship that she has sparked the crowd off into an outbreak of worship – of Jesus as God. Everyone is joining in. It is out of control – out of the ruler’s control. The ruler can’t stop it and she doesn’t care. He never helped her anyway, just held her in her place, down.

The ruler thinks quickly and recalls laws from scripture that forbid work on the Sabbath.[[2]](#footnote-3) Acts of God never came under these prohibitions but only work done by people. With no time to think of anything better he steps forward, raises his hand, and addresses the crowd. They all stop.

**“There are six days in which work should be done; therefore, come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day”.**

He manages to stop the worship party for a moment but he hasn’t thought this one through too well.

Firstly, The only physical work Jesus did was to place his hands on her. He even made her walk over to Him. The ruler himself is doing more work than Jesus by getting up and addressing the crowd all stressed out.

Secondly, if Jesus has healed her, this is not the work of His profession as a carpenter turned itinerant Rabbi. He isn’t a doctor – unless of course it is the work of God!

Thirdly, who would heal her even if she were to come back on another day of the week? He’s had 18 years and done nothing.

Fourthly, if Jesus is the one who would heal her tomorrow, who is he to dictate Jesus’ itinerary? Jesus’ authority is clearly superior to his.

The rulers are in trouble. They have claimed divine authority for centuries. Jesus has just performed work on a woman. It is obviously a work of God and it was done without them. So, the question arises, just who does have divine approval – the rulers or Jesus? It can’t be both. In Jesus’ presence, quoting laws doesn’t work. He has just transformed her from a hopeless cripple to a dancing worshipper of Himself – as God.

By putting out this challenge he has turned this meeting into a Jewish legal forum. It is now a court scene. The rules are simple. The one whose response silences his opponent wins. The challenge of the ruler is not well thought out but is an old familiar argument from the law of Moses. It would normally be enough to quieten any smart young teacher, barely come of age, from some low-class family and some obscure town.

Jesus accepts their challenge. He stares at the ruler, the attendant, and the elders in turn. **“You hypocrites, you stage actors, frauds, the lot of you**.**”**  Jesus moves the topic from law theory to law practice. and whether they live up to the law.

**“Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?”** They are silent. They all do that and so break their own laws. Now Jesus has put out a challenge to them to find a single example in His life of any law He has broken. They can’t find any because Jesus has perfectly fulfilled the law throughout his whole life. Silence. No reply.

Jesus continues, talking about her**, “And this woman, a daughter of Abraham, as she is, who Satan has bound for 18 long years, should she not have been released from this bondage on the Sabbath day?”**

These fellows are shown up. They have lost their cover. They are established teachers of the law, but Jesus has shown their whole community that they are law breakers and they don’t even know the real meaning of the law is to do good. But Jesus hasn’t finished with them yet. He pronounces them ‘**hypocrites’,** and her a ‘**daughter of Abraham’**. He publicly reverses the social order. She, a bent over, cursed woman, now healed and freed. They, self-appointed law men, now exposed as false law breakers.

The power struggle hasn’t finished. Jesus announces that her problem is not just sickness but bondage to Satan. For 18 years, they have been powerless over both sickness and Satan. They know better than anyone that when Messiah comes He will ……oh!

In a moment, Jesus heals her body, delivers her from Satan and declares her a daughter of Abraham. He frees her from social stigma and from sin, and he pronounces her a child of God. She has become a spontaneous, joy filled worshipper of God. She is Jesus’ living sermon right before the eyes of all of us. The crowd get it. The rulers won’t get it.

They do good to their donkey but won’t let anyone do good to her. Where are their priorities? Is their donkey more valuable to them than a person? Yes, it is. Their donkey is part of their wealth, but she put almost nothing in their collection boxes. They love money. They don’t really care about people.

They would prefer she remain bound by Satan. Whose side are they on? Jesus came to set her free, but not just her, the whole crowd are rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him. They all became freed from those false rulers that day. Their masks have been removed. Their real selves are revealed. They preach God’s Word, while doing the works of Satan, and keep all their community in bondage. They are left sitting in shame, powerless to control the public anymore. They are stripped of their false authority. The verdict is clear. Battle lines are uncovered. God and Jesus vs the elders, rulers, and Satan.

Jesus left their synagogue and went on His way towards Jerusalem. There even more senior elders would gang up and plot His crucifixion. But then He would rise from the dead and win the decisive victory over Satan – for that is the real work of Messiah.

But on that great Day for that town the unbelieving rulers were left in shame within their four walls, while all the public, now liberated, followed Messiah down the road out into their community where the message about Jesus the Messiah really belongs.

Paul Duncan

www.redemption.org.nz

**Jesus met a hunchback woman** “Get real” questions

1.

1. What condition did this woman have?
2. What did most people believe to be the cause of her condition?
3. What day of the week did this event occur?
4. What was her immediate response to being healed?
5. What did the ruler use to try and discredit Jesus’ miracle?
6. Who did the crowd believe Jesus was?
7. What did the rulers claim for themselves?
8. What did Jesus pronounce about them?
9. The crowd were captive to the rulers but what did Jesus give them?
10. Where did the crowd go after leaving the Synagogue?

Authority Community evil spirit Freedom Hunchback

Hypocrites Law Messiah Sabbath worship

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| 2. | What did they think was the cause of her condition? | What do you think is the cause of such conditions? |
| 3. | Who were the spiritual and civil authorities of their community? | Who are the spiritual and civil authorities of your community? |
| 4. | How did sickness and oppression affect this woman’s life? | How does sickness and oppression affect your life? |
| 5. | How did she feel trapped? | How do you feel trapped? |
| 6. | How did Jesus heal her? | Can Jesus heal you? How? |
| 7. | Why did the rulers oppose Jesus’ healing work? | What obstacles or beliefs oppose Jesus healing you? |
| 8. | What was wrong with their challenge to Jesus’ work? | What is wrong with your beliefs that limit Jesus’ work in your life? |
| 9. | What changes occurred in this woman’s world? | What changes do you need in your world? |
| 10. | What did this woman believe as she faced the rest of her life? | What do you believe Jesus can do for you? |

1. Luke 4:16-21 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Exodus 20:9 Deuteronomy 5:13 Lev 23:2,3 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)