Healing

Healing is the restoration of body, mind, or spirit to a state of wholeness and well-being. This restoration may be physical, as in the recovery from an illness or injury, or spiritual, as in the forgiveness of sins and justification before God. Ultimately, healing is embodied by Jesus, as he healed the sicknesses of many in his earthly ministry and secured ultimate healing for all in his death on the cross and subsequent resurrection.

Concept Summary

Both Hebrew and Greek have a variety of terms that describe the process or act of healing. In Hebrew, the most common words for healing come from the root רָפָא (*rāpāʾ*, "to heal") which describes a process of restoration to a state of well-being or wholeness. Other terms, such as שָׁלוֹם (*šālôm*, "peace, wholeness") and אֲרוּכָה (*ʾărûkâ*, "healing, restoration") refer to the state of wholeness that results from an act of healing or restoration. Other terms carry their own connotations, but still fall into the general category of restoration to a state of wholeness. In the NT, the most common term for healing is θεραπεύω (*therapeuō*, "to

heal"), followed by ἰάομαι (*iaomai*, "to heal") and related words, which describe the process of restoration to health in similar fashion to the Hebrew terms. These terms are also used to indicate spiritual healing, whether from demonic possession or in relation to salvation. In addition, the verb σώζω (*sōzō*, "to save") can refer to an act of healing.

Theological Overview

The overall picture of healing in the Bible is one of restoration. In the OT this is sometimes the restoration of physical health after some illness or injury (Exod 21:19; 2 Kgs 8:29). At other times the healing is spiritual in nature, and the restoration involves forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Thus even faithlessness can be "healed" (Jer 3:22), as can apostasy (Hos 14:5). Isaiah portrays the wounds of the suffering servant as bringing about healing (Isa 53:5), picturing the grace and forgiveness that come through Jesus Christ. In this way, the OT writers use the concept of healing to portray humanity itself being restored to its original, sinless state.

The NT often tells of physical acts of healing that Jesus performed during his earthly ministry. At times, exorcising a demon from someone is referred to as healing (Matt 17:16; Luke 8:36); this demonstrates that the NT authors also saw healing as a restoration of the whole per-

son. Finally, some NT authors describe salvation and spiritual restoration as healing (Matt 13:15; 1 Pet 2:24; Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:7). Through the sacrifice of Christ, the illness of sin is healed and the Christian is restored to a state of righteousness and wholeness before God.

Lexical Information

Old Testament

רָפָא (*rāpāʾ*). vb. **to heal**. *To restore something to a condition of health or wholeness.*

By far the most common term for healing in the OT, *rāpāʾ* is frequently used to describe physical healing or recovery (e.g., Exod 21:19; Lev 13:18; 2 Kgs 8:29). It can also be used figuratively for spiritual healing. This usage is especially prominent in the Prophetic literature (e.g. Isa 6:10; 53:5; Hos 7:1). In this way, Jeremiah (Jer 3:22) and Hosea (Hos 14:4) can speak of Yahweh healing (*rāpāʾ*) the apostasy of the people. The word can also be used to describe mending an inanimate object that has been broken (1 Kgs 18:30; Jer 19:11). All these uses have in common the idea of restoring something to harmony and wholeness.

מַרְפֵּא (*marpēʾ*). n. masc. **healing**. *Refers to restoration, nearly always in a metaphorical sense.*

The noun *marpēʾ* is related to the verb רָפָא (*rāpāʾ*, "to heal") and refers to healing or wholeness. However, in the OT it only occasionally refers to literal healing (e.g., 2 Chr 21:18). Instead, it usually refers to healing as a metaphor for a general state of wellness or peace (e.g., Prov 6:15; 12:8; 16:24). Unlike *rāpāʾ*, *marpēʾ* usually does not have spiritual connotations, although it does in Jer 14:19 and Mal 3:18.

שָׁלוֹם (*šālôm*). n. masc. **peace, wholeness**. *A state of well-being or health.*

The term *šālôm* in the OT expresses profound wholeness and well-being. The term can be used in many ways, but it especially designates a state of prosperity or good health. This is commonly seen in questions about one's current welfare (*šālôm*; Gen 43:27; Exod 18:7; Judg 18:15; 1 Sam 17:18).

אֲרוּכָה (*ʾărûkâ*). n. fem. **healing, restoration**. *A state of health or wholeness, especially after injury or destruction.*

Though not commonly used in the OT, the term most often refers to the state of spiritual healing graciously given by God (Isa 58:8; Jer 8:22). Jeremiah twice uses the phrase "bring health (*ʾărûkâ*)" in parallel to רָפָא (*rāpāʾ*), drawing a close connection between the terms (Jer 30:17; 33:6). It also can be used to describe the repair of inanimate objects, such as the walls of Jerusalem (Neh 4:1) and the temple (2 Chr

24:13).

חָיָה (ḥāyâ). vb. **to live, revive.** *To be alive; to be restored to health.*

The verb occurs very frequently in the OT. It usually refers simply to living or being alive (e.g., Num 4:19; Deut 30:16; Isa 55:3). It may also, however, refer to the process of returning to health. Joshua uses the term to describe recovering from being circumcised (Josh 5:8). Elsewhere it may refer recovering from illness (2 Kgs 1:2; Isa 38:1), or even from feelings of despair (Gen 45:27). In these latter cases, the term describes not simply being alive, but being restored to a state of true life and health.

חָבַשׁ (ḥābaš). vb. **to bind up.** *Used literally to describe the bandaging of wounds, and figuratively to describe the healing of brokenness.*

The term is usually used to describe the binding of materials together. Several authors use the verb to indicate the act of saddling a donkey (e.g., Gen 22:3; Num 22:21; 1 Kgs 2:40). However, the term is also used to refer to the binding of wounds so they may heal; this generally appears in the OT as a metaphor for God's care for his people (Hos 6:1; Psa 147:3; Job 5:18). Isaiah also uses the term to refer to the figurative binding up of the brokenhearted (Isa 61:1).

New Testament

θεραπεύω (therapeuō). vb. **to heal, restore.** *To heal a sickness or restore someone to a right condition.*

Throughout the Gospels and Acts, the most common use of *therapeuō* is to describe the physical healing of an individual from an illness or affliction. When the verb takes an object, it is usually a general description of illness ("disease," "sickness"), rather than a specific disease (e.g., Matt 4:23; 9:35; Luke 9:1). In this way the term describes healing in a generic manner. However, the term is also used several times specifically of exorcism—i.e., driving a demon out of someone constitutes healing that person (e.g., Matt 17:18; 12:22; Luke 8:2). In these contexts, the term describes the restoration to a state of wholeness and well-being. In the LXX and extrabiblical literature, this term is used for the act of "serving" (e.g., Prov 29:26 LXX; Dan 7:10 LXX), but it has this meaning in the NT only once (Acts 17:25).

ἰάομαι (iaomai). vb. **to heal.** *To restore something to a state of health or wholeness.*

The NT authors use *iaomai* mostly to describe physical healing (e.g., Matt 8:8; Mark 5:29; Luke 8:47). In this way, the term describes the restoration of a person to a previous state of well-being. Occasionally the term can be used figuratively for spiritual healing (e.g., Matt 13:15; 1 Pet 2:24; Isa 61:1 LXX). In these contexts, *iaomai* refers to restoration and for-

giveness from sin.

ὑγιαίνω (hygiainō). vb. **to be healthy**. *To be in a state of wellness or health.*

In the NT, this verb appears mostly in participle forms, which mean "being healthy" or "(someone/something) that is healthy." It can be used to describe someone as being in good health (Luke 5:31; Luke 7:10; Luke 15:27). In the Pastoral Letters, Paul uses the term frequently to describe doctrine "that is healthy (hygiainō)"—i.e., "sound." In both cases, the verb describes something or someone functioning as intended.

ὑγιὴς (hygiēs). adj. **healthy**. *In a state of healthiness.*

This word is related to ὑγιαίνω (hygiainō, "to be healthy"). In the NT, hygiēs almost always describes someone who has been made well through healing, rather than someone who is already healthy and not in need of healing (e.g., Matt 12:13; Mark 5:34; Acts 4:10). In Titus 2:8, it is used differently: Paul refers to speech that is "sound" (hygiēs).

σώζω (sōzō). vb. **to save, make well**. *To save or deliver someone from harm or illness.*

The term sōzō is a common one in the NT and frequently describes deliverance from both physical death and sin. People with various illnesses long to touch Jesus' garment, thinking that doing so will cause them to be "saved" (sōzō), clearly meaning "healed" (e.g., Matt 9:21–22, Mark 6:56). Elsewhere, those who had been possessed by demons are described as "healed" (sōzō; Luke 8:36), and other acts of healing are referred to as saving (sōzō; Mark 10:52; Luke 17:19; Acts 4:9).

διασώζω (diasōzō). vb. **to save, cure.** *To rescue or deliver someone from harm.*

The term usually describes someone being saved from harm or delivered safely through some perilous situation, such as Paul and others being saved from a shipwreck (Acts 27:43–44; 28:1, 4). However, the term is also used in Matt 14:36 and Luke 7:50 to describe someone being healed from sickness. In either sense of the word, the person "saved" is delivered from injury and established in safety.

καθαρίζω (katharizō). vb. **to cleanse, purify**. *To cleanse someone from impurity, usually leprosy.*

In the NT, this word often refers to the process of making someone or something ritually clean (e.g., Matt 23:25; Acts 10:15; Heb 10:2). It also very often refers to the act of healing someone from leprosy, a disease which caused ritual uncleanness (e.g., Mark 1:40; Luke 7:22). In the letters, the biblical authors use the term for spiritual purification (e.g., 2 Cor 7:1; Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:7). In every case, the person is cleansed from impurity and restored to a purified state.

ἴασις (iasis). n. fem. **healing, cure**. *Refers*

to the act of healing and restoration to a state of well-being.

This noun is related to ἰάομαι (*iaomai*, "to heal"). In the NT, *iasis* occurs only in Luke and Acts. In Acts 4, it occurs twice, both times with the connotation of healing as a sign of divine power at work in the early church (Acts 4:22, 30).

ἴαμα (*iama*). n. neut. **healing.** *Refers to the capacity to heal.*

This noun is related to ἰάομαι (*iaomai*, "to heal"). In the NT, *iama* occurs only in 1 Cor 12, where Paul describes the use of spiritual gifts in the church. Each time, it occurs in the phrase "gifts (χάρισμα, *charisma*) of healing (*iaomai*)." Thus, in the NT, it never refers to the act of healing. It is clear that the gift is given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:9) and is not given equally to all members of the church body (1 Cor 12:28, 30).

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