

## The Messianic Miracles of Jesus

In our teaching theme on the life of Jesus we have come to his miracles.

What I would like to do today is first of all to look at miracles in the whole Biblical context then look at how Jesus' miracles are different. Then I would like to finish with some comments about miracles in our lives.

The Bible teaches us that God is actively involved with us by interacting with His creation. The miracles God does are examples of God temporarily overriding the laws He established for the universe to run on. When Jesus walked on water, He temporarily changed how the law of gravity applied to His body.

We read in the Bible that many of the Old Testament prophets did miracles. We also read that the magicians in Egypt were able to mimic the first four miracles that God did through Moses in front of Pharaoh. In Acts 8 in the New Testament we read about Simon the sorcerer who tricked people into believing he had power from God. So the Bible teaches us that not all miracles are done through the power of God, and that Satan has some power to do the miraculous too. It is up to us to be discerning about what we accept as being from God.

Jesus' miracles were not like the magic tricks that Simon the Sorcerer did to enhance his reputation, they were signs to confirm that He was the one that Israel was waiting for, the promised messiah.

All the miracles Jesus did pointed to Him being Israel's Messiah. Jesus did not just heal the sick and raise the dead for the express purpose of taking their suffering away or to show the power He had. The purpose at the beginning of His ministry was to show His credentials as the messiah.

In Mark 2 Jesus doesn't just heal the lame man, He uses it as an opportunity to demonstrate to the religious leaders that He has the authority to forgive sins.

*"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."  
- Mark 2:9-11 NKJV*

Have you noticed that sometimes Jesus would tell people to tell everyone about the miracle He did and other times He would tell them not to tell anyone? The miracles Jesus did before Matthew 12 were public displays of His messianic credentials for the benefit of the Jewish leaders. Faith of the recipient was not necessary for a miracle to be done. After Matthew 12 and the rejection of him being the Messiah by the religious leaders he only responded to individual people on the basis of their faith. Before the Matthew 12 rejection Jesus' policy was, 'tell others what God has done for you'. After the rejection they are told 'don't tell anyone'.

The miracles continued after Matthew 12 but instead of proving that He was the Messiah, the purpose changed to training for the disciples. After their rejection of Him, Jesus told the Jewish leaders that the only public sign that would be given to them was the sign of Jonah - "his resurrection." Jesus now wanted people to come to their own conclusions about who He was.

One of the problems Jesus faced was the masses who followed Him just for the physical benefit they received through His miracles. Jesus wanted people to lift their heads and look beyond the food He provided or the illness He had healed and for people to see Him for who He is. He is not just some miracle worker from Galilee; He is the promised messiah, the Son of God.

*'Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."' John 6:26*

Let me explain some of the evidence supporting this perspective.

Among the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran is one that scholars call the "Messianic Apocalypse". The scroll was written just before the time of Jesus and gives us an insight to the thinking at that time. It tells us that the Jews were looking for one to come who would be able to do particular signs that no one else could do. The pieces of the scroll that have survived tell us how they were longing for the messiah to come and establish an eternal kingdom and that He would do the healings promised by the prophet Isaiah:

*'... the earth will listen to his anointed one (the messiah) ... he [the Lord] will honour the pious upon the throne of an eternal kingdom, freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twisted. ... And the Lord will perform marvellous acts such as have not existed, just as he said, for he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the poor.'*

"Messianic Apocalypse" scroll.

Jesus started His ministry by reading from Isaiah and claiming that He was the fulfilment of the prophecy. This is the quote that Jesus read:

*"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*

*Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."* - Luke 4:18-21 NKJV

A little bit later when John the Baptist was in prison, John sent someone to ask Jesus if He was indeed the one they had been waiting for.

*“When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, ‘Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?’ Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.’ ”*

Matthew 11:2-6 / Luke 7:18-23

These are the other two prophecies from Isaiah that Jesus is claiming are about Him:

*“In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see”. Isaiah 29:18.*

*“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.”*  
Isaiah 35:5-6.

Sometime prior to the coming of Jesus, the Rabbis divided miracles into two separate categories: those that anyone could perform if empowered to do so and those only the Messiah would be able to do. There are three miracles they decided that only the messiah could do:

1. Healing a leper,
2. Casting a demon out of a person who couldn't speak, and
3. Healing a blind person.

1. The first Messianic miracle was the healing of a leper in Matthew 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-45 and Luke 5:12-16. There had been no healing of a Jewish leper from the time of Moses and the completing of the Mosaic Law. Mariam was healed of leprosy (Num 12:10) before the Mosaic Law and Naaman who was not a Jew was the only one healed after it was given. (2 Kings 5). Moses had given detailed instructions from God on what the priests were to do if a leper was healed. This is found in Leviticus 14:2-33. It is this procedure that Jesus sends the healed lepers off to do when they present themselves to the priests.

2. The second Messianic miracle was healing and casting out a dumb demon. The Pharisees could cast out demons but they needed to communicate with the demon to get him to tell them his name (as Jesus did with the demoniac). If a demon stopped a person from being able to speak then, according to the Rabbis, only the messiah could cast out a demon like that.

*“Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”*  
Matt. 12:22-23

‘Son of David’ is a title of the messiah. See also Mark 3:19-30 and Mark 9.

3. The third Messianic miracle was the healing of a blind man in John 9:1-32. Only the messiah could heal someone that was blind from birth. Jesus gave sight to people who were born blind in (Matt. 9:27; 12:22; 20:30; Jn. 9:6).

After the first messianic miracle was performed the Pharisees began to investigate Jesus as a possible Messiah. When he performed the 2nd messianic miracle they rejected Him as a possible Messiah because He broke the oral law prohibitions of healing on the Sabbath. After Jesus performed the 3rd messianic miracle the Jewish leaders rejected the people who believed He was the Messiah.

I think there is a practical lesson for us to learn from the error the religious leaders made. I think it is part of our human nature to categorise the people we get to know. To put them in a box with a particular label. This tendency has its uses but causes us problems as well. One problem is that we put people in the wrong box because we make assumptions which are often based on limited information. Another problem is we don't allow for people to outgrow their box.

The religious leaders had Jesus in a box. He was a carpenter from a hick town. He was not from Jerusalem; His parents and grandparents were not religious leaders so what would He know about God?

Matthew's gospel presents Jesus as the Jewish messiah. In chapter 15 he sums up Jesus' credentials as the messiah this way:

*"Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marvelled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel." Matt 15:30-31*

Glorifying God is the right response to a miracle.

In this account two blind men know that the son of David can heal their blindness, something no other prophet had done.

*'And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.'* Matt 20:30-34

This is why the leaders were angry with the people

*"But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant." Matt 21:15*

## **Miracles in our day.**

When we are seeking God for a miracle one common problem is our mistrust of God's goodness towards us. The reality is that God loves us more than we have the ability to understand.

### **We can never understand all of God's dealings with us.**

*"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding."* - Proverbs 3:5 NKJV

*"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."*  
- Isaiah 55:9 NKJV

### **God never surrenders His sovereignty.**

God does what He wants, when He wants, how He wants and never asks for anyone's permission. God's plan for mankind will be completed no matter what opposition Satan and his supporters throw at God. God is always in charge; He is sovereign over His creation.

Being able to visualise ourselves having what we want is no guarantee that we will get it. 'Naming it and claiming it' is no guarantee either. We know from our own experience that not everyone gets the miracle they ask for. Tragically, many people have left the church because they have found that these sorts of overly simplistic slogans have not worked for them. Some have wrongly concluded that 'God doesn't love me' or that 'God doesn't exist'. In essence, they have thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

The apostle Paul didn't get healed because God knew that a greater good would come from not healing Paul.

*'Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.'*  
- 2 Cor 12:8-9 NKJV

God deals with us all as individuals so don't compare how God is dealing with you to how He appears to be dealing with others.

*"We would not dare put ourselves in the same class with, or compare ourselves to, those who recommend themselves. Whenever they measure themselves by their own standards or compare themselves among themselves, they show how foolish they are."* 2 Cor 10:12. ISV

Also Peter asking Jesus about what will happen to John.

*'This He spoke, signifying by what death he [Peter] would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me." ... Peter, seeing him [John], said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"'*

*Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."'* - John 21:19, 21-22 NKJV

God has different priorities to us. He puts the eternal above the temporary. God does some things only when we ask. (James 4:2). He does other things when no one asks and sometimes He does the opposite to what we ask or just says 'no' or 'not yet'. God is the king of the universe and knows what is best for us within His overall plan and purpose for mankind.

### **Give thanks before asking.**

I believe that sometimes we don't get the miracle we ask for because we don't approach God with a thankful heart.

*'Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.'* - Psalm 100:4 NKJV

Why be thankful? There are three reasons in next verse and these reasons apply forever.

*For the LORD is good;  
His mercy is everlasting,  
And His truth endures to all generations.* - Psalm 100:5 NKJV

Our thankfulness is not based on our circumstances but on the qualities of God. If we don't approach with a thankful heart we may not get the miracle we would otherwise get.

Paul was always thankful to God before he prayed.

### **Philippians:**

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* - Phl 4:6-7 NKJV

### **Romans:**

*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers,* - Rom 1:8-9 NKJV

### **Ephesians:**

*Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:* - Eph 1:15-16 NKJV

## **Colossians:**

*We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, - Col 1:3 NKJV*

## **Thessalonians:**

*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, - 1Th 1:2 NKJV*

## **Timothy:**

*I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, - 2Ti 1:3 NKJV*

## **In the Old Testament.**

### **Jonah:**

Chapter 2 has lots of crying out to the Lord from the belly of the fish but nothing happens until verse 9 when Jonah says:

*'But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."  
So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.'*  
- Jonah 2:9-10 NKJV

Expressing thanks to God is an appropriate action to demonstrate our faith in accordance with what James teaches.

### **Jesus example:**

In the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 Jesus simply gives thanks for what they have and then distributes it to them.

*'And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.'*  
- John 6:11 NKJV

The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.

*'Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. "And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me." Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"*  
- John 11:41-43 NKJV

I hope I have given you enough examples to convince you of the importance of giving thanks to God before we ask for things from Him. Thank Him for the half of the glass that is full before asking Him to fill the other half.

Today I have given you a bit of an overview of some of what I believe the Bible teaches about the miracles Jesus did 2000 years ago and that He is still doing today.

Let's remember to learn from the mistakes the religious leaders made in evaluating Jesus claims to be the messiah. We can do this by looking for people to outgrow the boxes we tend to put them in.

And lastly, let's remember to approach God with a thankful heart for His love and goodness towards us before we ask Him for anything.