

WEEK TWENTY-THREE

Believing is Seeing

H. A. Ironside

God's heart goes out to all men everywhere. He does not desire the death of the sinner, but that all should turn to Him and live. He cries, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" But if men refuse to heed His word they will be given up to hardness of heart. The conscience, stirred by the Word, may respond at first and one may feel in his very soul that he should yield to Christ, but it is possible to stifle the voice of conscience to refuse to heed, until at last conscience no longer speaks but becomes seared as with a hot iron and men are hardened in their sins and die without hope.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had been ministering in grace for about three-and-a-half wonderful years, and had given evidence through signs and wonders which He wrought and the marvelous

message He brought to man, that He was the Messiah and Redeemer of Israel, but we read though He had done so many miracles, yet they believed not on Him. Miracles alone will never convince if people refuse the Word. No signs, no wonders, no miracles, will ever reach their consciences, if they are determined to go on in their sins and refuse to repent.

Abraham reminded "a certain rich man who died and was buried" of this, when he said of his still-living brothers: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." What a solemn responsibility that puts upon every one of us who hear the Word of God as recorded here in His blessed Book. If men reject this testimony, signs and wonders and miracles will not convince them. They become

hardened in their sins. These people refused to hear the word Jesus brought, and so the saying of Isaiah was fulfilled when he cried out (chapter fifty-three), "Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" He was implying that the great majority would reject the testimony of Jesus when He came, and they did. Only a little group received Him. And today that question still comes to us, "Who hath believed, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Have you believed, dear friend? Have you opened your heart to the Word of God? Has His mighty saving power been revealed to you? Do you know Him as the One who has delivered you from going down to the pit, and has given you a place in Christ, free from all condemnation? If you spurn the Word, God has no other message for you.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST:
THE MIRACLES

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Before studying the miracles of Jesus, we ought to first define what a miracle is and examine the purpose thereof.

The word miracle has developed a broad meaning over time. Almost any unexpected, exciting, beneficial occurrence is considered a miracle. For instance, it's a miracle when some people arrive on time. It's a miracle when little Johnny eats all of his vegetables. It's a miracle when the car starts. It's a miracle when you get an A on a test or make the game-winning basket. While God may certainly be involved in these activities they fall more under the category of His providence than that of a miracle.

Henry Thiessen states that a "genuine miracle is an unusual event, accomplishing some useful work, and revealing the presence and power of God."

Smith's Bible Dictionary

"A miracle may be defined to be a plain and manifest exercise by a man, or by God at the call of a man, of those powers which belong only to the Creator and Lord of nature; and this for the declared object of attesting that a divine mission is given to that man."

Smith further adds,

"No phenomenon in nature, however unusual, no event in the course of God's providence, however unexpected, is a miracle unless it can be traced to the agency of man (including prayer under the term agency), and unless it be put forth as a proof of divine mission... A miracle is not a violation of the laws of nature. It is God's acting upon nature in a degree far beyond our powers, but the same kind of act as our wills are continually exerting upon nature."

Holman's Bible Dictionary describes a miracle as "Events which unmistakably involve an immediate and powerful action of God designed to reveal His character or purposes. Words used in Scriptures to describe the miraculous include sign, wonder, work, mighty work, portent, power. These point out the inspired authors' sense of God's pervasive activity in nature, history and people."

If you will notice, all of these definitions reveal that the purpose of a miracle is always for God's glory. Anything that appears to be miraculous but does not bring honour to Jesus Christ is not a miracle.

Dr. Harry Carr explains four Greek words used translated as miracle.

1. *Dunamis*: signifying power and emphasizing the mighty power of God.
2. *Teras*: translated wonder. This was what they produced in those who witnessed them.
3. *Simeion*: a word used by John. It means sign.
4. *Ergon*: a word that is used both for miracles and Jesus' works of mercy.

From these definitions and explanations we can draw the following conclusions.

1. Miracles involve more than God's divine providence.
2. Miracles are always an unusual event but not all unusual events are miracles.
3. Miracles do not violate the laws of nature but rather reveal the power to act upon nature in a way superior to mere human ability.
4. Miracles are an exhibition of powers that belong only to the Creator.

5. Miracles are always beneficial.
6. Miracles always reveal the presence of God.
7. Miracles always reveal the power of God.
8. Miracles always reveal the purpose of God.
9. Miracles always reveal the character of God.
10. Miracles may be performed by men only under the authority and by permission of the Creator.
11. Miracles performed by a man are a witness of the proof of that man's divine mission.
12. The most common words used to describe miracles are power, wonder, sign, and works.
13. Miracles are never for the glory of men.

One must remember that not every extraordinary event is a miracle. Satan, himself, is able to perform humanly unexplainable feats. Sorcerers, witches and other ungodly people have performed diverse forms of enchantments. However, they are always discernible because they violate at least one of the above principles. For this reason it is always dangerous to rely on experience alone. Always confirm your experiences by God's Word.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-9: What words are used to describe Satan's false miracles?

Exodus 7:11: Who performed false miracles? _____

Should we be deceived by claims of miracles and special signs to do not conform to biblical principles and do not exalt Jesus Christ? _____

Day
1

APPLICATION

What is the greatest truth you have learned from God's Word today and how can you apply it to your life?

THE HISTORY AND RELEVANCE OF MIRACLES

The History of Miracles

Although we can see God performing His own miracles from the very beginning, the first human agent of God to perform a miracle was Moses. Adam never did any miracles. Neither did Noah. The fathers of Israel Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never performed one miracle. While Isaac's birth would seem miraculous, it was an act of God not of man. Joseph's ability to interpret dreams was considered revelation and understanding given from God rather a miracle.

It was not until God chose to send a man to deliver His people that He used a man to perform miracles. The miracles performed by Moses were a sign that he was sent from God to accomplish His purpose with power and authority.

Exodus 4:1-9: What was Moses' complaint?

Why did the Lord say He would perform miracles at the hand of Moses? _____

As Moses performed miracles as a sign of his authority from God, so too would Jesus perform miracles demonstrating that not only was He sent from God, but indeed is God.

Deuteronomy 18:15: Who did Moses say Christ would be like? _____

Acts 3:22: What passage is Peter quoting? _____

John 6:14: What did the people recognize after Jesus fed five thousand? _____

Exodus 7:19: What was Moses' first public miracle? Turning _____ into _____.

John 2:1-11: What was Jesus first public miracle? Turning _____ into _____.

Turning the water to blood was a plague of death and destruction. Turning the water to wine was a symbol of life and joy. These two first miracles would find their unity of meaning when Jesus held up the cup and said, "This cup (wine) is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:20) The wine is the symbol of the blood.

The Relevance of Jesus Miracles

Miracles were never performed for entertainment. They are not simply to amuse the curious.

Luke 23:8-11: Who was excited to see Jesus? _____

Why did he want to see Him? _____

Did Jesus perform for his entertainment? _____

Jesus did not perform miracles as some sort of side show or spectacle. They were not used to entertain nor for any carnal glory. Jesus did not every perform to prove His identity here because Herod had already silenced the voice of God in beheading John the Baptist. If one will not hear the Word of God preached from the man of God, he is not likely to see a miracle from God.

The purpose of Jesus' miracles was to reveal His deity. They were a sign of His authority. Review **John 6:14**.

John the Baptist recognized the authority of Jesus. Yet in prison he sent his disciples to inquire of Jesus. He wanted to know if Jesus were merely a prophet or if He was truly the Messiah. Jesus answered by citing

His miracles.

Luke 7:19-22: What miracles did Jesus perform that signified His deity to John? _____

Among the most revealing of all His miracles was the restoring of sight to the blind. Aside from the obvious symbolism in this act, we find that this was a sign that the Jewish people should have recognized from the prophets of old. The restoration of sight should have been recognized as a sign of the Messiah's coming.

Psalms 146:8: What does the psalmist prophecy that the Lord will do for the blind? _____

Isaiah 35:4-5: What two miracles does Isaiah prophecy that God will perform? _____

Isaiah 42:6-7: What miracle does the Lord promise? _____

Careful examination of the Scriptures reveals that the giving or restoration of sight had never been done by any of the Old Testament prophets. In fact, none of the Apostles even performed this miracle. Ananias was the only one to come close, when he restored Saul's sight after his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:17)

Furthermore, this was the most frequently recorded of all of Jesus miracles. (Matthew 9:27-31, 11:5, 12:22, 15:30, 21:14; Mark 8:22-26, 10:46-53; John 9)

DAY
2

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EXAMINING THE MIRACLES

Aside from the resurrection, thirty-seven miracles of Jesus are recorded in the four gospels. Some miracles are recorded more than once and others only once.

20 in Matthew
18 in Mark
20 in Luke
08 in John

Read the following passages and give a brief description of each miracle.

John 2:1-11:

Matthew 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:12-16:

Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39:

John 4:46:-54:

Matthew 9:2-8, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:18-26:

Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48:

Matthew 12:9-13, Mark 3:1-5, Luke 6:6-10:

Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26, Mark 5:22-24, 35-43, Luke 8:43-48:

Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10:

John 5:1-9:

Matthew 9:27-31:

Luke 5:1-11

Luke 7:11-15:

Matthew 9:32-33

Mark 1:23-28, Luke 4:31-36

Matthew 12:22, Luke 11:14:

DAY
3

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THE DISTINCT PERSONS OF THE TRINITY

Today we will continue examining the miracles of Jesus. Continue to describe the miracles found in the following passages.

Matthew 14:14-21, Mark 6:34-44, Luke 9:12-17, John 6:5-13:

Matthew 17:24-27:

Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 18:35-43:

Matthew 14:24-33, Mark 6:45-52, John 6:16-21:

John 9:1-7:

Matthew 21:18-19, Mark 11:12-14:

Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30:

Luke 22:49-51, John 18:10:

Luke 13:10-17:

Mark 7:31-37:

John 20:26:

Matthew 15:32-39, Mark 8:1-9:

Luke 14:16:

John 21:1-11:

Mark 8:22-26:

John 11:17-44:

Matthew 28:5-6, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-7, John 20

DAY
4

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THE RESULTS OF JESUS' MIRACLES

For many, the miracles of Jesus were proof of His claim to deity. The miracles confirmed the truth of His teaching and no one was able to dispute Him or His works.

John 2:23: What was the result of Jesus miracles? _____

John 7:31: How did people relate the miracles of Jesus to His claim to be Christ? _____

Luke 19:37-40: Why did the multitude praise God? _____

In spite of these signs and wonders, many still refused to believe. They could not deny His works. They even acknowledged them. Yet their hard hearts would not believe.

Mark 6:2-3: What type of works did even the unbelievers say Jesus performed? _____

What was their response? _____

John 10:32: In spite of His good and mighty works what did the Pharisees wish to do? _____

They denied being angry over His works but they could not deny His works. So instead they accused Him of blasphemy.

He responded that His works were sufficient testimony for them to believe.

John 10:36-38: Who did Jesus say He was? _____

What was the sign of His true identity? _____

The miracles of Jesus were done so that man might believe on Him. However, man's unbelief can be a stubborn thing. After many mighty works, Jesus rebuked their persistent unbelief.

Matthew 11:20: In what cities did Jesus perform most of His miracles? _____

Why were these cities held more accountable? _____

"Seeing is believing" is so often quoted that some likely think it's in the bible. Although Jesus did say, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," He was not intending to compliment a man's demand for proof. In fact, Jesus taught just the opposite. He taught that believing is seeing. When we believe in Him we see great works. Listen to what He told Martha before He raised Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:40: What is the key to seeing the power of God? _____

One of Jesus' very own apostles had adopted this dangerous doctrine. Even though He had seen Jesus many miracles, he doubted the resurrection.

John 20:25: Who was this doubting apostle? _____

John 20:29: Who is more blessed than he? _____

His miracles were a sign of His identity. They were proof that He was Who He claimed to be. However, people are not always persuaded by the facts.

John 12:37-43: What had Jesus done? _____

Were all persuaded? _____

Why do you believe people would refuse to believe when proof is laid before them? _____

Who did believe? _____

Why would they not confess Him? _____

Does this make sense to you? Why or why not? _____

Although you may not reveal Himself to you by walking on the water, calming the storm or raising the dead, the salvation He provides is no less a miracle. While some today still demand miraculous proof, never forget that Jesus says that you have the greater blessing for believing without seeing.

As you read the Scriptures, remember that He has given us a reliable account of His miracles in His Word. When you read the miracles of Jesus, remember their purpose - to increase you faith in God's Son.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote: "All our Lord's miracles were intended to be parables. They were intended to instruct as well as to impress. They are sermons to the eye, just as his spoken discourses were sermons to the ear."

DAY
5

APPLICATION

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TABLE TALK



PASTOR'S MESSAGE