

The Miracles of Jesus

Bold in word and deed.

Without doubt, Jesus spoke and acted with a wondrous authority. Even by themselves, his words captivated the crowds who gathered to hear him. The Scriptures clearly describe the impact of his teaching, *And when Jesus speaking, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.* (Matt 7:28-29) Even his enemies were stunned by power of his words. Once, when the temple guard was sent to arrest him they returned empty-handed. The chief priests and Pharisees, angry at their failure questioned them, *Why did you not bring him?* The officers answered simply, *No one ever spoke like this man.* (John 7:45-46).

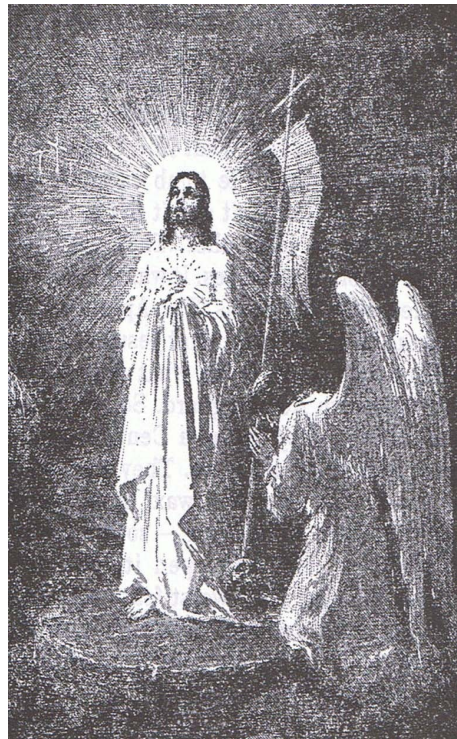
Jesus also demonstrated his authority and called men and women to faith by the miraculous signs and wonders he worked. Here too the scriptures record the response of the crowds. *They were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.* (Mark 7:37)

Many Miracles

The wonder-working power of our Lord was not limited to a few occasions. In fact he worked an astonishing number of miracles. He worked miracles in the world of Nature: he calmed raging storms, walked on the water, changed water into wine, multiplied loaves and fishes, brought about a miraculous catches

of fish, and even arranged to have Peter find his temple tax in the mouth of a fish.

Jesus was also a wondrous healer. He cured Peter's mother-in-law, healed the centurion's servant and the official's son. He cured many of leprosy, blindness, deafness and speech impediments. He healed the lame, the paralyzed, and a man with a withered hand. A woman with a hemorrhage found healing just by touching the hem of his garment. He even restored the severed ear of one his captors. And there are the numerous healings of which we know little but of which the scriptures merely summarize:



And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease

and every infirmity among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains..., epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. (Matt 4:23-24)

And this is not all, for he cast out demons, even the most fearsome, who begged Jesus for the terms of their surrender (cf Matt 8:28ff). Even more astonishing was the fact that he raised the dead. A widow of Naim received her son back. So too did Jairus receive his daughter. And Lazarus, dead and buried four days rose and came forth from the tomb at the word of Jesus.

Faith is Essential for Miracles

Our Lord was clearly motivated by compassion to work his many miracles. The Scriptures attest to this (cf Mk 1:41; Jn 11:38). But it would be wrong to reduce him merely to a problem solver or a wandering wonder-worker. What Jesus most clearly sought in working miracles was to draw people to greater faith

The phrase "greater faith" is significant. When Jesus saw no faith he would not work miracles. This was especially clear in the sad rejection of Jesus by his own kin.

Jesus declared *"A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house."* And he *could do no mighty work there,*

except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. (Mark 6:4-6) Jesus also rebuked regions which had witnessed his miracles when he did not see an increase in faith:

Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (Matt 11:21)

But it is also true that Jesus did encounter faith in individuals for he worked many miracles. And he always linked his work to their faith. Sometimes he would inquire of their belief: *And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. (Matt 9:27-30)* At other times Jesus would link the miracle he had already done to their belief: *And behold, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I shall be made*

well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. (Matt 9:20-22)



Thus, it is the teaching of Scripture that faith is essential for miracles. Jesus responds to the faith he encounters and helps it to grow.

Our own Call to Faith

The biblical accounts of the miracles show what it means to have a saving faith. Those who believed the Lord could help them, sought him out. Many did this at great sacrifice, others were

persistent. Still others needed the help of friends. But it is clear, their faith moved them to action. They believed Jesus could help them so they sought him out. And when they found him they placed their requests before him. How many prayers are never answered because they are never made? We may think, *God knows what I need.* Yes he does but he expects us to ask. When a blind man stood before Jesus he asked the blind man a rather obvious question *What do you want me to do for you?* The blind man responded, *"Lord, that I might see."* (Mk 10:51) Sometimes too, we must persist in our asking. In the same story of the blind man he kept crying out, *Jesus Son of David have mercy on me!* He was so persistent that the crowds began rebuking him. But Jesus heard and at length said, *Bring him here.* (Mk 10:46ff) Ultimately faith will not only bring us healing, it will, by God's grace bring us to salvation. For it is by faith that first call upon the Lord. It is by faith that we trustingly cling to him and present all our needs. And it is by faith that we persevere in running the race before us. Ultimately it is this faith which leads us to the finish line: eternal life with God in glory. *Are you ready for a miracle?...Ready as I can be!*