



## JESUS AS MIRACLE-WORKER

Group Question:

Have you ever witnessed a miracle, or experienced one yourself? How about experiencing an angel? What effect did it have on your faith?

### **Background:**

Jesus is the subject of all miracle stories (excluding angel stories, if we consider those miracles). Goethe calls miracles “faith’s favorite child.”

- There are 34 specific miracles performed by Jesus in the Gospels (excluding parallels/repeats)
- Luke contains 7 miracles not found in the other gospels
- Luke often connects prayer to miracle (5:16; 9:29 etc.)
- Often the result is that people give glory to God

### **1. Naïve observers?**

Are the evangelists just naïve – ready to believe any supernatural story they are given, or understand anything they see supernaturally?

No.

Disciples don’t believe the women; Luke 24,  
Thomas’s need for proof (John 20:26ff);

Walking on water and seeing a ghost (Mark 6:45-51 || Mt. 14:22-33); and

Luke’s distinctions between healings and exorcisms shows that belief in supernatural does not mean ignorance of the natural.

### **2. Why did Jesus perform miracles is a different question to why does Luke narrate miracles?**

What purpose do they serve in the story?

To some extent, a gospel writer must record miracles if they were part of Jesus’ life.

### **3. Jesus’ ministry doesn’t depend upon miracle**

On passages such as Luke 4 (temptation or Nazareth sermon); 23:8, Jesus refuses to do them, and often hushed it up (more common in Mk. “messianic secret”) cf. Luke 8:49-56

- people seem to be almost as frequently amazed by his teaching, as by his miracles... He used his teaching to establish authority

Yet miracles are characteristic of his ministry and impossible to divorce from it and yet, placement and selection imply that they are woven in to the story rather than the story built around it.

Discussion:

What is the difference between a miracle and magic? How is Luke’s story of Jesus performing miracles different to J.K Rowling’s story of Harry Potter performing magic? Read Acts 8:9-19. If they are so different, why does Simon think it’s the same stuff?

#### **4. • Reasons for including the miracle stories:**

- Are they about him?

Prove his Authority

Revealing his Authority (& scope of his kingdom)

Exercising his Authority (storms and loaves & fishes Lk. 8 and 9)

(note Moses parallels and typology – nature Red

Sea/wind/waves/, manna provision/feeding 5000)

Consistent eschatology: Jesus viewed his miracles as signs that the kingdom of God was on the verge of bringing the present age to an end

Realized eschatology: (Mt 12:28, Lk 11:20) – actual expressions of God’s reign, already fully present in Jesus’ ministry

Inaugurated eschatology: – (it’s started, and will continue) – the “now” and “not yet” of the kingdom

- Are they about us?

•Provoke faith (*pistis*)

•Answer faith

- Some texts

Luke 5:18-24 Which is easier - to forgive or heal; so that you might know that the Son of Man has authority on earth

Luke 10:13-15 If the miracles done in you had been done in them, they would have repented.

Luke 11:14-22 Beelzebub/Strong Man/ v.20 If I cast out demons by the finger of God then the k of G has come upon you –

Group Discussion:

Do you think miracles are as common today as they seemed to be in the New Testament (especially in the gospels and Acts)? If not, why do you think that is the case?

### **5. Kingdom connection**

Assertion of kingdom authority or sign that the kingdom has come?

More on this next week.

### **6. The differences between the Synoptics and John**

- works of power rather than signs
- faith: prerequisite or result?
- synoptists seem to make the connection between miracles an inbreaking of the kingdom: God's assertion of his royal power, perhaps especially evidenced in the exorcisms (which John omits completely)

### **7. • Luke in particular**

- miracles function as 'signs' of the authority of Jesus

They are works of Power (Luke stresses that the miracles are the result of *dynamis* (power) which is at Jesus' disposal:

4:36 With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!;

5:17 And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.;

6:19 the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.;

8:46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

In the book of Acts they are signs... and perhaps this is the meaning of some of the passages discussed... if I have this power, then that should be a sign to you that the kingdom is here/I have authority etc.

- miracles function to arouse faith in those around

Faith on the part of the supplicant is a frequently recurring theme ... to the point where Mark and Matthew say that stuff couldn't happen without faith; Mk. 6:5-6 he could not do; Mt. 13:58 he did not do

Again in Acts and hints in Luke it is clear that miracles are supposed to produce faith. Luke 10:13-15

### **Luke 10**

13 "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.

### **8. Exploring the kingdom connection**

"if I cast demons out by the finger of God then..."

Mt 12:28 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Lk 11:20 "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

### **Discussion:**

What do you believe about exorcisms? If they were so common in Jesus' day, why do we almost never believe that the cause of an illness (including mental illness) is the result of a demon? Are there fewer demons these days, or have we become more sophisticated, understanding that what they saw as a demon was really an epileptic fit?

**Homework: Reading: Luke 8:10; 11:17-18; 13:18; 18:16-17, 25; 22:16,18**  
**Caragounis, 'Kingdom of God/Heaven' in DJG, 417-30**