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*Magazine*

# The Healing of the Demoniac in the Synagogue

Mark 1:21-28

Wayne S. Walker

During his lifetime, Jesus performed several different kinds of miracles—healing the sick, making the lame to walk, giving sight to the blind, causing the deaf to hear, allowing the mute to speak, stilling the tempests, turning water into wine, using a few loaves and fishes to feed a multitude, even raising the dead. Our purpose in this article is to look at a specific example of another sort of miracle, that of casting out demons. The story is found in Mark 1:21-28, with a parallel account in Luke 4:31-37. Unbelievers generally deny the truthfulness of the miracles recorded in the Bible. The aim of this article is not necessarily to provide evidence to corroborate the biblical account of this miracle but, based on the conclusion that the record is not myth, legend, or fiction but actual fact, to see what we can learn from the story.

## Background

In verses 21 and 22 we learn that this event took place in Capernaum. The name is a Greek form of a Hebrew word that literally means “village of Nahum.” It was located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. After departing from Nazareth, Jesus apparently made it his headquarters during his ministry in Galilee (Matt. 4:13). Many of his mighty works were performed there (Matt. 11:23). On one particular Sabbath day, Jesus entered into the synagogue at Capernaum and taught. The Sabbath day, or seventh day of the week, was a day that God commanded the people of Is-

rael in the Old Testament law to keep holy (Exod. 20:8-11). Its primary purpose was to remind them that they had been slaves in Egypt and were brought out by God’s hand (Deut. 5:12-15). The synagogue was an institution that probably developed among the Israelites during the captivity and restoration and had become firmly established by the first century (cf. Matt. 4:23). It seems that one purpose for the synagogue was to help the people remember the Sabbath day by coming together on that day for instruction in the Holy Scriptures and later worship.

## Special Issue — The Miracles of Jesus — continued

We are not told specifically what Jesus taught. We do know that on other occasions when Jesus went to a synagogue, he read from the Old Testament prophecies which pointed to him as the Messiah or anointed one (Luke 4:16-21). Whatever he said, the people “were astonished at His teaching.” They were amazed because there was something about his teaching that made it sound different, that set him apart from others. “He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (cf. Matt. 7:28-29). While his teaching was firmly rooted in the Law of Moses, it was more than just reciting the law as did the scribes. There was some kind of evidence that his teaching came directly from the authority of God the Father (John 7:17; 8:28; 12:49). Keep this in mind because it will become even more important later on.

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The Man With the Withered Hand

Matthew 12:9-13; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11

Michael Hardin

Shortly before his death Jesus asked certain Pharisees, "What think ye of the Christ, whose son is he?" Jesus also questioned his apostles, "Who say ye that I am?" Peter's ready reply was, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded by pronouncing a blessing upon Peter.

Each individual upon this earth must answer the question, "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?" The answer we give to this question will not only affect our life upon this earth, but also our eternal destiny. The miracles of Jesus Christ established the truthfulness of his claim to be the Son of God and verified his divine mission. "And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. 11:2-5, NKJV). Jesus' proof to John the Baptist that he was the Son of God was the miracles he was performing and the preaching of the gospel to the poor. By a study of the miracles of Christ, we hope to convince each student that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God.

What Is a Miracle?

People of our time are quite free with the use of the word "miracle." Any unusual happening is glibly labeled a miracle. W.E. Vine says miracles are "works of a supernatural origin and character, such as could not be produced by natural agents and means" (An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words 75). A miracle is a demonstration of supernatural intervention upon an object or person in which no natural force is responsible for the effect produced.

In Hebrews 2:3-4 we have some information concerning miracles. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will" (Heb. 2:3-4, NKJV). This passage set forth the nature of miracles. They are signs,

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# Healing of the Centurion's Servant

**Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10**

**Charles G. Goodall**

The healing of the centurion's servant provides great insight into the work of the Lord, particularly in that it reveals his divine power and his great authority. Jesus was moved to take action to prove his Messianic power and demonstrate that he was not limited by location or cultural/spiritual boundaries. He showed that he was impressed by the faith of the centurion and moved by his humility. Jesus responded to a hurting request and showed that he is available to all who seek him. Jesus made two significant points with this miracle. (1) He could receive any man regardless of his difficulties and (2) he has the omnipotence to do so.

The setting is Capernaum on the sea of Galilee. As he entered the city, Jesus was approached by some Jewish elders who had come to get him to heal a centurion's servant who was near death. While these Jewish elders were unlikely purveyors of such a message, surprisingly they begged Jesus earnestly to come and heal the servant because the centurion "loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue" (Luke 7:1-5). Jesus said he would come but before he arrived at the home, some of the centurion's friends met Jesus with a message from the officer: "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (Luke 7:6-8). This was an unexpected response, to say the least, to come from a centurion.

It is noteworthy to mention that several centurions play a prominent role in the gospel story. At the crucifixion one said, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!" (Luke 23:47). Cornelius, a centurion, was "a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2). He obeyed the gospel when it was preached to him (Acts 11:14; 10:43, 47). Julius "treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care" (Acts 27:3) and at the shipwreck exerted himself to prevent the death of Paul (Acts 27:42-43).

But Jesus was moved by this centurion's response. "When Jesus heard  
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these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, 'I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!' And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick" (Luke 7:9-10).

**1. Jesus was not restricted to location for his manifestation.** There was a physical barrier of distance with this miracle. However, distance did not prevent him from healing the centurion's seriously ill servant. Jesus is able to transcend all physical and ideological blockages. Transcending distance in a miracle should produce the same level of awe produced when Jesus demonstrated his power over nature. "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matt. 8:27). This passage shows that Jesus is definitely the Messiah (Matt. 8:13). This miracle shows that Jesus has the Messianic power, on his own terms, to accept men into the *kingdom* (Matt. 8:10-11; Acts 2:47) or to reject them (Matt. 8:12). He can receive men on every continent and in whatever imprisonment of life they may find themselves. At the same time the unbelieving are condemned by the power of the Messiah (Matt. 8:12).

**2. Jesus was moved to take action to prove his Messianic power (Matt. 8:5-7, 10-13).** The humanity of Jesus is exhibited throughout this encounter by his expression of emotion. Though Jesus was God, he was God incarnate, which meant he was God and man. His humanity was manifested many times during his ministry. He rested (Matt. 8:24), he wept (John 11:35), he became angry (Mark 11:15), and he became thirsty (John 19:28). With the centurion, his humanity was touched. While we cannot work a miracle, we can be moved by the needs of others as Jesus was by this centurion. The humanity of Christ moved him to exhibit his divinity. Our compassion for others should move us to serve the Lord.

**3. Jesus overcame the spiritual obstacles.** In order to comprehend the import of this miracle it is vital to understand that from a Jewish perspective the Romans and Jesus were spiritual enemies. The Jews hated the Roman occupation and taxation and would have under normal circumstances hated and despised this centurion. In our own culture people are divided over race, politics, nationalities, the workplace, and are even at odds inside the family. These barriers can be breached in the same way as this centurion, by kindness and generosity. While the centurion had been kind and generous to the Jews, there is no evidence that he was a proselyte. The cultural and spiritual differences and their effects were certainly there. Jesus had the power to penetrate in that culture what seemed to be insurmountable. God sent his Son into the world to break down all spiritual obstacles and save the souls of all men (John 3:16). Jesus has empowered men to be saved through the gospel (Rom. 1:16). It doesn't matter whether they are identified with Jew or Gentile, bond or free, black or white, Muslim or apostate

Christianity, salvation is extended by Jesus to any who will come to him in obedience no matter how sinful their history (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Jesus reserves the power to condemn all who do not accept him (Matt. 8:12; John 12:48). Some who claim to be followers of the Lord will be rejected (Jas. 1:18-20). They do not have the faith that Jesus demands (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6). It is evident that there are those who feel they are secure in the kingdom, but in fact have never been in him and are considered workers of iniquity (Matt. 7:23). However, he picked the centurion to be an icon for the faith he desired. The Jewish elders were forced to witness the results.

**4. Jesus was impressed with the centurion's faith.** Not only did he have faith, but Jesus said he had "great faith." Jesus did not commend him for who he was or for what he had accomplished as a soldier. The centurion had a faith that enabled him to believe that Jesus' powers were not limited by space and time. What great faith! There are only two instances where Jesus identified the faith of someone as being "great faith." This Roman centurion and the Syrophenician woman (Luke 6:26). It is ironic, they both were Gentiles. This centurion had a personal faith in Jesus' supreme authority and power. He perceived Jesus to be sovereign over all men and nature. The centurion's faith in the Messiah allowed his trust in Jesus to transcend space, time, the Roman empire, the physical corruption of disease and himself (cf. Jer. 23:23-24).

Jesus has commissioned us to seek those who can be challenged to have great faith. "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage" (Matt. 22:9). In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). He calls from heaven for us to accept this challenge. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). One who claims faith in the Lord but does not obey is not a believer no matter how pious and sacrificial he may be (cf. Matt. 7:21).

**5. Jesus was moved by the humility of the centurion.** Think about it. A centurion, a Roman soldier and a Gentile, seeking out a Jew for help. Two barriers had to be overcome. One was the social barrier. A Gentile seeking to approach a Jew was socially unacceptable. In the second place there was a power and a status barrier. The fact that he was a Roman officer made the condescension even more unusual. Even though accomplished by representatives, the move of the centurion took great courage and humility. His indirectness was motivated more by humility and faith in Jesus' power than feeling superior. (Normally a Roman officer with the rank of centurion, should he wish to address someone, espe-



cially a lowly Jew, would summon him to be delivered by a low-ranked soldier.) Instead, when delivered by friends, his message to Jesus acknowledged him as “Lord.” He recognized that as Messiah he had the power to meet his need, which other men could not meet. Jesus was touched by the centurion’s sense of personal unworthiness. Augustine commented, “He counted himself unworthy that Christ should enter his house, he was counted worthy that Christ should enter his heart.”

We could safely assume that this centurion had a nice home. No doubt he could have extended lavish hospitality with the anticipated healing of his servant. No, “I am unworthy.” Jesus’ power was stirred by the centurion’s sense of unworthiness. Charles Spurgeon well said, “A sense of unworthiness finds a fit companion in a strong faith in Christ.” The void created by evacuating faith in self places one at the vantage point to receive truth. The centurion was thus steered away from the temptation to dictate to Jesus as to how the blessing should come. God has always favored those with a humble and contrite heart (Ps. 34:18; Isa. 57:15). We must genuinely feel our inadequacy and unworthiness to obtain the Lord’s help and acceptance (Matt. 23:12; cf. Luke 14:11; 18:14).

**6. Jesus is available to all who seek him.** He will respond to any that trust him. We sing the song, “Trust and Obey” and indeed, there is no other way. Our Lord’s favorites are those who come to him with no agenda and fully trust him: Master or slave, employer or employee, parent or child, wealthy or destitute, male or female, sinner or Christian, damned or saved, helpless or capable, hopeless or assured. *The Lord is not partial except to this spirit.* There are no other favorites. “There is no respect of persons with God: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). There really is no difference. Paul said to the Roman brethren, “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (Rom. 10:12). It is hard for man to approach Jesus begging and feeling totally dependent on him. Yet, there is no other way. Wealth, power, fame, position, and social acceptability are not to be criteria of merit in the kingdom. In fact, such are considered a liability because of the temptations they bring. The least in the kingdom is considered the greatest (Luke 22:24-26).

**7. The centurion acknowledged Jesus divine power.** This apparent inversion is an interesting characteristic of this miracle. Socially the preeminent bowed to the inferior. This action taken was reality but a reality that was far from apparent. The centurion confessed his inferiority to Christ. That was the “great faith” that had so drawn him to the centurion. Of course, Jesus had both taught and acknowledged his exaltation. John the Baptist had acknowledged the superiority of Jesus (Mark 1:7). However, it was not his

practice to exhibit his Messiahship before Roman officers. He refused Herod’s request for such (Luke 23:8-9). The centurion acknowledged a superiority that superceded the social structure of his society. This miracle, among others, and *the* miracle (the resurrection of Christ) establish the case for the Messiahship of Christ. The centurion did what we must all do, humble ourselves before all, no matter how it may hurt. Jesus was moved by the great faith of the centurion to trust him and his will to exhibit his power.

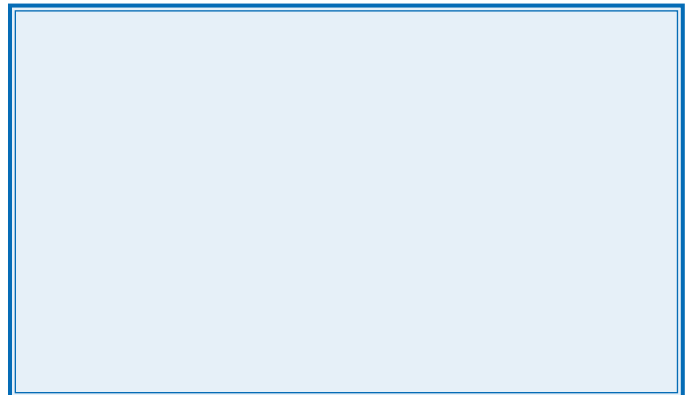
**8. Jesus responded to a hurting request.** He responded by “I will.” The emphasis is on the Lord coming himself, not on his coming to the centurion’s home. The slave is said to be “lying at home, paralyzed and dreadfully tormented.” Jesus himself would respond to meet the soldier’s need. Yes, Jesus was moved by the centurion, enough to use his power and authority. He was aroused by the centurion’s love for a slave. His appeal was not love of a fellow officer, nor for his wife and children, nor for one of his soldiers, nor even for a hired worker. The object of his love was a nobody in society and should have been, from their perspective, viewed as merchandise. Yet, the centurion loved this slave, this worthless and meaningless person. The Scriptures are full of admonitions to love the hopeless, the helpless, the uncomely, the crippled, and the needy. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 22:39). “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

### Conclusion

Several lessons are learned from the centurion. (1) Learn not to judge a man from the occupation in which he is found, unless the business itself is sinful. (2) The best men are those who have the least estimate of themselves. (3) We may be instrumental in introducing Christ to others without accepting him ourselves (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). We think of the carpenters who worked with Noah all those years on the vessel that could have saved them and yet they did not believe and perceive themselves worthy to receive salvation as Noah and his family did.

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# The Raising of the Widow's Son

Terry Sanders

A study of miracles always serves to either instill or solidify faith in the power of God. The word most often translated as miracle (*dunamis*) is also translated in other places as “power.” Thus, one can easily equate a miracle with power based on the word itself. Two other words are sometimes used to describe miracles (Acts 2:22). Sometimes they are referred to as “signs” in that they point to something. Other times the word “wonder” is used and describes the reaction of the witnesses. The raising of the widow’s son at Nain was by the power of God. It caused all to wonder and it pointed to an inevitable conclusion that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen up among us”; and, “God has visited His people.” And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region (Luke 7:11-17, NKJV).

Nain was a small city about twenty miles southwest of Capernaum. Capernaum served as the base of operations for much of the ministry of Jesus. The popularity of Jesus was increasing at this time and there “went with Him . . . a large crowd” (Luke 7:11). The Jews normally buried their dead some distance outside the city and there was a large crowd accompanying the funeral procession (Luke 7:12). This means that the miracle cannot be dismissed for lack of witnesses. The people who came from the city could also testify that the young man was really dead and not just pretending. These two groups meet near the gate of the city. It should be obvious that what happens next did not happen in a corner.

Here was a woman who was truly an object of compassion. She was a widow and now her only son was dead. Her one source of comfort after the death of her husband is now gone too. He either was or would be a help in supporting and protecting his widowed mother. How she must have felt the terrible weight of grief as this procession made its somber and mournful journey to the site of burial. How much do we empathize with her suffering? It surely must have seemed to her as if life itself held no hope for her now. This situation is going to change for she is about to meet one who will relieve her of grief and despair with just a few words.

We are told that Jesus was moved with compassion for her. It would not have been so evident to this poor widow. His words—“Do not weep”—might even have seemed strange to one in her situation. The events are happening so quickly now. Jesus stops those who are carrying the body and commands the young man to arise. He who was dead, his body wrapped in burial linens, sits up and begins to speak. What might his words have been? Did he call out to his mother? Did he ask a question of those who carried him forth? Did he thank Jesus and give glory to God? We are not told what he said. Nevertheless, our hearts are so touched by this wonderful scene that we can visualize something along this line. Can you not picture how everyone there was stunned by what had just transpired? Such an event would leave all momentarily paralyzed and speechless. How did Jesus present the son to his mother? Did he, with much tenderness and compassion, say, “Weep no more, but rejoice. Your son who was dead is alive again”? Once again we want to think something along this line as we visualize the scene of mother and son being reunited. It seems only natural that fear would fall upon the witnesses of this miracle. The word “fear” is sometimes connected to dread and terror. Such fear causes one to shrink away. This fear did not cause that type of reaction. This fear is a reverential fear connected with glorifying God. The very minute this young man sat up at the command of Jesus led them all to the conclusion that they were in the presence of someone great. It was not just any greatness; it was one

with the power of life and death. The obvious conclusion would be that this was one with the power of God. This conclusion, based on such a tremendous miracle, would be spread far and wide and would cause interest in Jesus to increase even more.

### Doing Good

When Peter was at the house of Cornelius he told the audience about Jesus. He said, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). Some of that “doing good” certainly includes his miracles. While all of these had a spiritual purpose (which we will look at in the next section), we cannot overlook the many physical results of the miracles.

Let us consider some of the miracles performed by Jesus and their physical results:

- The feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:1-9). This miracle concerned quantity. It also relieved the *hunger* of the multitude.
- The cleansing of a leper (Matt. 8:1-3). This man had a disease that had no cure from man, but he was *cured* by the power of God.
- The woman with an issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48). She had been unable to find relief in the medical field, but her *healing* was provided by Jesus.
- The calming of the storm (Mark 4:35-41). The fear of disaster on the sea disappears as Jesus provides *safety*.

All of these, as well as others, had people being relieved in a very physical way. This was Jesus “doing good.” While that might not be the prime purpose of miracles, it was undeniably a part of miracles.

### The Purpose of Miracles

Perhaps the purpose of miracles might be summed up in one word—verification. The *American Heritage Talking Dictionary* says verification is “2. b. A confirmation of truth or authority. b. The evidence for such a confirmation. c. A formal assertion of validity.”

**A miracle is a verification of divine power.** Take the case of Nicodemus. “There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him’” (John 3:1-2). The signs wrought by Jesus were proof to Nicodemus that he was sent from God. John the Baptist, in prison at the

time, wanted to know if Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Jesus’ answer dealt with the signs he did (Matt. 11:3-5). In more modern times there have been the sad cases of some misguided person claiming divine power. The fact that they cannot produce bona fide miracles is eloquent proof that they do not possess what they claim.

This raising of the widow’s son could only have been performed by one possessing the power of God. Jesus was, after all, God in the flesh (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). Josh McDowell has a section in his book, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, where he points out that, if God became a man, then you would expect that man to have power over death. Jesus certainly had that power. This miracle is added to the number of miracles performed by Jesus. This number is so large that ignoring them or explaining them away is foolish and impossible.

**A miracle is a verification of the source for faith.** John says, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). Those who heard of the raising of the widow’s son would either have to pass it off as a fabrication or believe that God was with them (Matt. 1:23). Faith finds verification through the one who performed all these miracles—Jesus, the son of God.

**A miracle verifies the one who delivers the message.** Hebrews 2:1-4 says, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” (Heb. 2:1-4). God confirmed the word by miracles. Paul stated that miracles were proof of his apostleship, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12). The raising of the widow’s son verifies the message of Jesus by whose hand so many miracles were performed. Jesus was believed to be a “great prophet” by those who witnessed this miracle. It goes without saying that a prophet always has a message. The miracle witnessed that day just outside the city of Nain would absolutely verify his message.

### The Ultimate Application

It is usually normal for man to think sequentially and sometimes logically. Those who would see Jesus perform this kind of a miracle knew that it meant a number of things. One of these was that Jesus had power over life and

# When Jesus Calmed The Storm

Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25

## Dick Blackford

“It was a dark and stormy night. . . .” Literary critics have long ridiculed that line as a means of introducing a short story. But it really was a dark and stormy night and this was no mere “story.”

Hardly anything is more terrifying to man than to be in a storm at sea and to be totally at the mercy of the elements. It is difficult to imagine a situation in which a man finds himself more thoroughly helpless. Two such experiences are etched in the author’s memory. One was when he was on a Navy destroyer (DD) in the North Atlantic Ocean headed to Newfoundland. The DD is one of the smallest ships in the Navy and is easily tossed in turbulent waters. Coming at night makes the storm even more mysterious and adds greatly to the insecurity. So torrential were the waves that we had to strap ourselves into the bunk to keep from being pitched out on the deck. Trying to navigate your way from one end of the ship to the other is very treacherous and many have lost their lives in such endeavors. It was an experience the author never wishes to repeat.

The other occasion was when fishing with a brother in Christ in the Gulf of Mexico. It was a small craft and we

were out farther than we should have been when we were surprised by a sudden storm. We had the motor wide open trying to make it to safety, but the waves were so turbulent that we became airborne several times. Admittedly, the author’s faith was not what it should have been for these occasions. There was another time, on his third visit to the Bible lands, when he barely escaped a storm while on a voyage across the Sea of Galilee.

### The Sea and the Storm

The geographical makeup of the region lends itself to sudden and violent storms. The Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level. It is warmer at the surface than its higher surroundings with steep cliffs and hills that range from 300 to 1000 feet high to the east and snow-clad Mt. Hermon to the north. The mountain passes create a natural funnel for the wind. Thus, literally “there *came down* a storm” (Luke 8:23). It was not an ordinary storm of which these fishermen had experienced many, no doubt. It was furious and of seismic proportions. Matthew uses the Greek word for “earthquake” to describe the troubled waters. Others have depicted storms on this sea as “a boiling cauldron.”

death. Then there is the case of Lazarus and the daughter of Jairus. These would also add to the word about Jesus. Eyewitnesses told what they had seen and others spread the story about. Then there came his own death and how he rose from the grave himself. All of these do factor into proving him to be the Son of God. However, there is one more thing. These particular events lead one to a common proposition: If he is able to give life after death, what of life after my death?

Jesus promised that “. . . everyone that who sees the Son and believes in Him shall have everlasting life; and I will

raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). Paul repeats such a promise in 2 Corinthians 4:14 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The only logical reason we should believe any of this is due to the fact that Jesus has exhibited his power over death in example by raising the widow’s son. This gives us hope and confidence that we will, in that final day, be like him (1 John 3:2). The grave is no longer the victor; the victor is now Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

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The account of this remarkable event in the life of Jesus depicts both his humanity and his deity.

### The Humanity of Jesus

The boat was covered with waves and water was rapidly entering the boat, much faster than they could bail it out. They were in real jeopardy of capsizing. And what was Jesus doing? Sleeping!

Like his fellow human beings, Jesus hungered (Matt. 4:2), thirsted (John 4:7; 19:28), became weary (John 4:6), sorrowed (John 11:35), and needed sleep (text). These were not mere “manifestations” to make Jesus look “human” when he really wasn’t. It is Inspiration telling us he really was hungry, thirsty, weary, sad, and sleepy. The context shows this as one of the most exhausting days in Jesus’ ministry. And he collapsed in deep sleep, indicating how tired he was. While he sought reprieve from the multitudes, many continued to follow in other boats that also experienced this storm (Mark 4:36).

These were experienced sailors but the situation was totally out of their control. They panicked. Fear overcame their faith and in desperation they cried, “Master, Master!”

### Does Jesus Care?

“Carest thou not that we perish?” What a low blow. They had already witnessed many of his marvelous works. What they would see that night would surely shame them later for asking such a question.

How could Jesus sleep? He had a total absence of fear and complete trust in his Father who was in charge. This should have been true of their faith, which became paralyzed. They had been trusting in their own experience and abilities as sailors and not in the one who made the sea. Peter later developed this kind of trust and was able to sleep as he awaited death at the hand of Herod (Acts 12:1f).

When one is awakened suddenly from deep sleep, he is often disoriented. Jesus was so collected and thought so little of the danger that he calmly used it as a teaching opportunity. He didn’t frantically exclaim, “Where am I? Why did you let me sleep so long?” Matthew’s account has him testing and mildly rebuking them before he rebukes the storm. Mark and Luke have him questioning them about their faith after this notable miracle. Apparently he did it both before and after.

### Did They Have Faith?

What good is one’s faith if he loses it instead of uses it? The storm blew their faith away and it was “gone with the wind.” If we can’t lay hold of our faith when we need it most, of what value is it? There is a “peace that passes understanding” available for his disciples (Phil. 4:7). Paul found this peace and it sustained him through at least three shipwrecks (2 Cor. 11:25; Acts 28).

Jesus did not say they had no faith. He asked, “Where is your faith?” (Luke 8:25) and “Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Matt. 8:26). They forgot everything in a moment of panic and did not demonstrate complete trust that would allow them to have the same calmness and serenity that Jesus displayed.



Dusk over Sea of Galilee from Kursi  
Todd Bolen, Pictorial Library of Bible Lands

There is irony in that these expert sailors turned to a carpenter to “bail them out” of their predicament. His place of birth and growing up years was not on the sea (Bethlehem, Nazareth). Nor was it his ability as a carpenter they were seeking. Were they merely asking for more manpower to control the ship? Were they seeking his help as a man?

Whatever they meant by their question, they believed they were perishing and that Jesus was going to go down with them. He is included in the word “we.” This had to have been a terrible storm to so frighten these experienced sailors who made their living on the sea. Although they had seen his notable miracles, although they called him “Lord” and “Master,” and cried “save us,” although they believed he could help in some way, they seem not to have fully grasped that he was deity and that they were in the company of the Son of God. Although they thought he could do “something,” never in their wildest dreams could they imagine the outcome.

### The Power of His Spoken Word

If a mere man had spoken the words “Peace. Be still,” they would have no effect. But this was no mere man, *only*. This one was directly involved in every aspect of the creation (Col. 1:15-17). The worlds were framed by *his word* (Heb. 11:2). “By the *word* of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the *breath of his mouth* were all the host of them . . . For he *spoke*, and it was done; he *commanded*, and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:6, 9). Notice, all this was accomplished by the power of his *spoken* word. Certainly, he who made the sea with the word of his mouth could calm it the same way! It is this same word from this same mouth that said “Let there be light,” and there was (Gen. 1:3). It was the spoken word of this same one who said, “Lazarus, come forth,” and Lazarus arose from the dead.

(John 11:43, 44). It was the same mouth that said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). If we cannot accept the power of his word to accomplish what he says it will, then our concept of God is too small and we have little faith.

This miracle occurred instantly. Seamen tell us that after a great storm that the waters remain turbulent, but Matthew and Mark say it was "perfectly calm" (NASV).

The total surprise and amazement of those who accompanied him is seen in their question of astonishment: "What manner of *man* is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matt. 8:27). They still can't understand how a *man* could do this. It is here that we may begin to see what was wrong with their faith. They hadn't put it all together yet. They are slowly coming to the realization that he was more than a man. Indeed we see both the humanity and irresistible proof of the deity of Jesus. Jesus rebuked the storm and he rebuked the disciples. All of God's creation is subject to his rebuke. Jesus calmed the storm and he also calmed their hearts. By rebuking the sea he showed himself to be the same one who made the world, "when at his rebuke the waters fled" (Ps. 104:5, 8, 9). They should now be forced to the inescapable conclusion that only the Creator could take control of the mighty forces of nature which he set in motion to begin with.

#### Points To Remember

**1. Sin brought fear into the world (Gen. 3:10).** Genuine faith and love as taught by the Savior can dispel fear as light dispels darkness (Matt. 8:26; 1 John 4:18).

**2. Acceptable faith is more than an acknowledgment of God's existence and power,** but includes our total trust and reliance on him and commitment to him.

**3. Just as Jesus could calm a raging storm that frightened these seasoned sailors, he can protect us in similar dangers.**

**4. His written word is just as powerful as his spoken word (John 20:30, 31).** Key in on the word "*written*."

**5. When Jesus became man, he did not cease to be God or become man *only*.** He became man *also*. Nor did he not lay aside his omnipotence (Ps. 89:8, 9; Matt. 1:23).

**6. All of us are voyagers on the sea of life, and we will not get across without some storms.** What peace of mind should mark a Christian, even in times of great stress and trouble! There is power in the word of the Savior to sustain us through the storms of life. This was proven when Jesus took control of the most powerful forces of nature that are beyond human control. Just as he could calm a physical storm, his same strength is available when furious and

howling storms of life threaten to engulf us. Whether you are having turmoil in the family, coping with personal problems, difficulties on the job, health challenges, or problems in the church, he is there.

**7. Wherever it has gone, Christianity has elevated men in the areas of morality and dependability.** Shouldn't Christianity also show the world how to meet the storms of life? "What do we more than others" if when calamity strikes, we shriek, wring our hands and go to pieces? Isn't this what we should expect from those who have no faith and no hope? Don't we owe the Lord and the world a better example than this?

**8. If the winds and the waves obey him, shouldn't we?**

#### Conclusion

Since we live on this side of his mighty works, why should we not trust him more to get us through the storms of life? These things were "not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). We end this study with the words of a hymn which the author has loved since childhood.

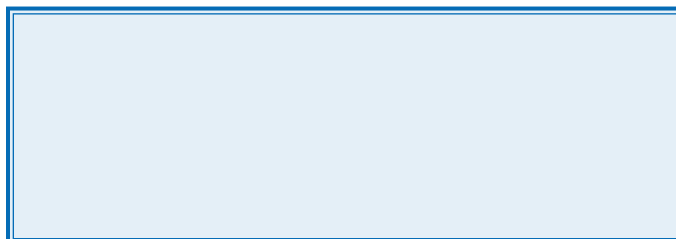
The chimes of time ring out the news; Another day is thru  
Someone slipped and fell, Was that someone you?  
You may have longed for added strength, your courage to renew  
Do not be disheartened, for I bring hope to you.

Chorus: It is no secret what God can do,  
What He's done for others, He'll do for you  
With arms wide open, He'll pardon you.  
It is no secret what God can do.

There is no night, for in His light you'll never walk alone  
Always feel at home, wherever you may roam  
There is no pow'r can conquer you,  
while God is on your side  
Just take Him at His promise;  
Don't run away and hide.  
(*It Is No Secret*, Stuart Hamblen)



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# The Healing of the Gadarene Demoniac

Joe R. Price

Matthew says that . . .

Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan (Matt. 4:23-25).

Each of the synoptic accounts of Jesus' Galilean ministry describe this journey to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee "to the country of the Gadarenes" (Luke 8:26; also called Gergesenes, Matt. 8:28). The healing of the Gadarene demoniac is recorded in Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39. All three of these accounts should be carefully considered when studying this remarkable miracle.

Mark reports that upon arriving at the eastern shore of the sea, Jesus and his disciples were immediately met by "a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs" (Mark 5:2-3). Matthew informs us that another demon-possessed man was also present (Matt. 8:28). Some see this as proof of biblical error, since Mark and Luke only speak of one man. However, the complete picture is given as all accounts are assembled. Simply put, all three accounts focus on the more prominent of the two men.

Their behavior was very wild and fierce, and their very presence prevented the safe and easy passage of others along the way (Matt. 8:28). It is important to note that men of normal strength and means were unable to successfully bind and restrain the man (Mark 5:4). When men had tried to keep him under guard, the demons drove him into the wilderness (Luke 8:29). His desolate, disturbing, demon-possessed lot was to live among the tombs, to wander the

mountainsides in nakedness, crying out and cutting himself with stones (Mark 5:5; Luke 8:29-30).

The demons who had possession of this man identified themselves to Jesus: "My name is Legion, for we are many" (Mark 5:9). Luke explains that "many demons had entered him" (Luke 8:30). The demonic possession of human bodies is often noted in the synoptic accounts of the life of Jesus (Mark 1:23; Matt. 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; 17:18; etc.). Some marveled when Jesus cast out demons, while others faithlessly attributed his work to Satan (Matt. 9:32-34). But, one thing is clear: demon-possession was real during the days of the first century. Jesus acknowledged the presence of demons, and they acknowledged him:

When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me." For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many" (Mark 5:6-9).

Now, the demons who had unmercifully tormented this man beg Jesus to show them mercy: "Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country . . . all the demons begged Him, saying, 'Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.' And at once Jesus gave them permission" (Mark 5:10-13). The demons evidently intended to remain in this physical realm. However, when Jesus gave them permission to enter the swine, their presence in the swine's bodies cause the hogs (about two thousand) to stampede into the sea and drown (Mark 5:13; Matt. 8:32). McGarvey describes a location on the east side of the Sea of Galilee where "a spur of the mountain thrusts itself out toward the lake so that its foot is within forty feet of the water line. This is the only spot on that side of the lake where the mountains come near the water. The slope is so steep and the ledge at its foot so narrow that a



herd rushing down could not check itself before tumbling into the water” (McGarvey and Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel* 346). The swine-herders rushed to tell others what they had seen, and “the whole city came out to meet Jesus” (Matt. 8:34). They discovered the man clothed and in his right mind, sitting with Jesus (Mark 5:15). In fear, the inhabitants of the region pleaded with Jesus to leave. The man also begged Jesus not to leave, but that he would be allowed to continue with him. Instead, Jesus sent him to tell others about the great things the Lord had done for him (Mark 5:17-20).

Lessons and exhortations from this miracle include the following:

### **1. The power of Jesus Christ over the unseen world.**

Jesus had just shown his power over nature to his disciples by calming the wind and the sea (Mark 4:35-41). Now, Jesus used his superior power over the demonic realm to cast out demons from the human bodies they possessed. When the seventy disciples returned from their appointed work, they joyfully exclaimed, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:17-18). Satan was falling from his self-exaltation as Christ was binding the strong man and plundering his hold upon the souls of men and women (cf. Matt. 12:26-29; Luke 10:17-18; 1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14-15).

Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). Being Creator, he is preeminent over all creation, including the invisible creatures of the spiritual (non-material) realm (Col. 1:15-18). Being God, he demanded the unclean spirits to come out of the man and they did (Mark 5:8). The healing of the Gadarene demoniac affirms Christ’s power over the forces of darkness against which Christians wrestle, and assures us that by “the power of His might” we will victoriously stand in “the evil day” (Eph. 6:10-13).

**2. Concerning the nature of demons and demonic possession.** Demons are spirits, not physical diseases: “When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were *demon-possessed*. And He cast out the *spirits* with a word” (Matt. 8:16). Skeptics attempt to dismiss the reality of demons, attributing their stated presence *solely* to the effects they had upon the bodies they possessed. Demonic possession of bodies could cause physical and mental illness and handicaps (cf. epilepsy, Matt. 17:14-21; mute, Matt. 9:32; blind and mute, Matt. 12:22). But it is not scriptural to attempt to identify demonic possession as only a physical or mental malady. For instance, Matthew distinguishes between demon possession and disease: “They brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed

them” (Matt. 4:24). L.A. Stauffer helps to summarize this point: “Demon possession was more than a superstitious explanation of insanity and agonizing pain, both of which are prevalent among modern men. The evidence of this is the man’s recognition of Jesus, his knowledge of the identity of Jesus, and his plea for relief from the torment he knew Jesus could grant” (*Truth Commentaries: Mark* 108).

Some will certainly raise the speculative question, “Does demon possession occur today?” The simple answer is, “no.” The Scriptures support this answer.

Zechariah prophesied of the simultaneous departure from the land of “the prophets and the unclean spirit” in the day when a fountain was opened “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1-3). The New Testament affirms that the blood of Jesus cleanses the stain of sin (Heb. 9:14). With the complete revelation of his gospel, prophecy came to an end as the prophet foretold (cf. John 16:8-13; 1 Cor. 13:8-10). Accordingly, Zechariah also foretold that the unclean spirit would depart from the land “in that day.” If demons continue to possess human bodies today, we are forced to the conclusion that, rather than Satan being bound and limited, Christ is now the one who is bound (Matt. 12:28-29; 1 John 3:8)!

Furthermore, the Gadarene demoniac had such strength that chains and shackles could not restrain him (Mark 5:4). If demon-possessed people do exist today, where is even one of these with the same sort of strength? (“Demons: Ancient Superstition or Historical Reality?”, Wayne Jackson, <http://www.christiancourier.com/archives/demons.htm>).

### **3. The doctrine of “faith only” is the faith of demons.**

Like the demon in the Capernaum synagogue, Legion immediately recognized Jesus and the judgment he was under: “And he cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me’” (Mark 5:7; 1:23-24). If it is true that justification by faith only is “a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort,” then why are not the demons saved (*The Book of Discipline*, 1980, The Articles of Religion, Art. IX, 57)? After all, “even the demons believe and tremble!” (Jas. 2:19). Legion showed as much faith as some who consider themselves Christians. Legion acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God and believed his word (for instance, about his future judgment), the same as many today. We might even note that Legion obeyed the Lord’s word when he commanded them to leave the man’s body. But, demons are not saved (Matt. 8:29; 25:41). And, neither are sinners who believe Jesus is the Son of God but do not obey all of his word (Jas. 2:24; John 10:42-43; 14:15; Matt. 7:21-27; Luke 6:46; Gal. 5:5-7). Jesus continues to be “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:9).

**4. A future judgment of torment is real.** Legion begged Jesus not to torment him “before the time” and not to “command them to go out into the abyss” (Luke 8:28, 31; Matt. 8:29). The demons knew a judgment of condemnation was set for them and that it involved torment. Some deny the Bible’s teaching that the torment of the wicked lasts forever. They believe “torment” amounts to annihilation—that one will forever cease to exist. The word translated “to torment” in Matthew 8:29 is *basanizo*, and is used in Matthew 8:6 of the centurion’s servant who was “dreadfully tormented” being paralyzed. Clearly, the servant did not cease to exist, for Jesus healed him, removing his torment. This word is used again by Matthew in chapter 14:24, where the boat containing the disciples was “tossed” by the waves. Are we to conclude that the boat ceased to exist because it was “tormented”? No, of course not! Neither should we conclude the “torment” of the abyss referred to by Legion was annihilation. He was speaking of the actual, painful punishment of “everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41).

In describing God’s wrath against the wicked, the Bible speaks of “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night” (Rev. 14:11). Those who die in the Lord will “rest” from their labors, but the servants of Satan will “have no rest day or night” (Rev. 14:13, 11; see Rev. 20:10, where the devil, the beast and the false prophet “will be tormented day and night forever and ever”). Jesus warned of “the fire that shall never be quenched—where their worm does not die” (Mark 9:43-44). The rich man was very conscious of his painful torment “in this flame” (Luke 16:23-24).

**5. The compassion of God.** Jesus was moved by compassion to free this man from his demonic bondage (Mark 5:19). Similarly, God’s great mercy is evident in and available through the sacrifice of his Son for the sins of the world (John 1:29; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:1-7). The Son of God came to “destroy the works of the devil,” and he did so in dramatic fashion (1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14-18). By delivering the Gadarene from demonic possession, Jesus shows himself to be the one who can deliver sinners from the clutches of Satan, sin and death (Heb. 2:14-15; Gal. 3:13; Acts 4:12; Tit. 2:14).

**6. How we should react to Jesus:**

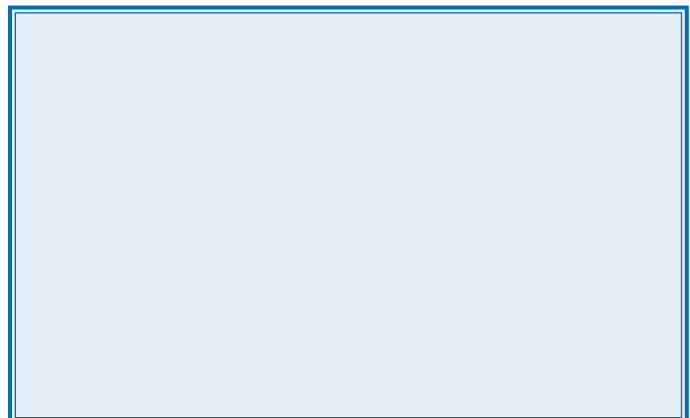
*With gratitude and faith.* As with the other miracles of Jesus, this one gives sufficient evidence to cause one to believe in him (cf. John 20:30-31). Now healed, clothed and in his right mind, the man sat with Jesus as the people went out to see what had happened (Mark 5:14-15; Luke 8:35). The man begged Jesus that he be allowed to go with him when Jesus prepared to leave. All of this shows the man’s faith in Jesus and thankfulness that he had freed him from demonic bondage. We must gratefully and faithfully follow Jesus wherever he leads because of the great deliverance from sin we have from his hand (Rom. 12:1).

*Not with fear and rejection.* The swine-herders ran to the nearby city telling others of what they had seen (Mark 5:14; Luke 8:34). Many came out to see this great sight for themselves (Luke 8:36-37). But, when they saw Jesus and the man just as the herdsmen said, instead of believing in Christ and trying to learn more from him, they reacted with fear, dread and unbelief: “Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear” (Luke 8:37; cf. Matt. 8:33-34; Mark 5:15-17). Were they afraid of some calamity worse than the death of a herd of swine? Were they in danger from this Galilean? The text does not elaborate. But, in their fear they ask the Lord of heaven and earth to leave their presence. Are you moved by fear or faith when confronted with Jesus Christ and his gospel (cf. Acts 24:24-25)?

**7. We must spread the good news.** Instead of taking the man with him, Jesus directed the man to “go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you” (Mark 5:19; Luke 8:39). The man did this, and more (Mark 5:20). Notice that he told his family, his friends, and strangers. Similarly, we can tell family, friends, and strangers of the great salvation Jesus gives, that they too might be saved (John 1:41; Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19-20).

Truly, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? . . . so then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:14-15, 17). When we teach others the gospel, some will marvel over it like the inhabitants of Decapolis; some will be afraid and reject Christ like the Gadarenes, but some will believe it, obey Jesus and be saved. Then they, too, can join in telling others (2 Tim. 2:2).

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# The Raising of Jairus' Daughter and Healing the Woman With the Issue of Blood

Donnie V. Rader

During his Galilean ministry, Jesus worked many miracles. Two of those were the raising of the daughter of Jairus and healing the woman with the issue of blood. This is one of three miracles wherein Jesus raised the dead. The others were the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7), and Lazarus (John 11).

All of the synoptics record these miracles (Matt. 9:18-36; Mark 8:22-43; Luke 8:41-56). Each account is independent of the other. They all agree on the main facts. However, the shades of difference suggest that none borrowed from the other.

We study these two miracles together because one is sandwiched in the middle of the other miracle.

As with all miracles Jesus worked, these prove that his claim (to be the Son of God) is true (John 20:30-31).

## The Raising of Jairus' Daughter

**The record.** This story is recorded in Matthew 9:18-19; 13-16; Mark 5:22-24; 35-43; and Luke 8:41-42; 49-56.

**The story.** Five things we want to notice about the story.

1. *The people.* First there was Jairus who was the ruler of the Synagogue (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41). His daughter was twelve years old (Mark 4:42) and an only child (Luke 8:42)). The mother is also mentioned (Mark 5:40; Luke 8:51, 56).

2. *The request.* Jairus' daughter was sick and at the point of death (Mark 5:32; Luke 8:42). His request was for the Lord to put his hand on her so she would be healed (Mark 5:23). Later a messenger came and reported that the girl had died (Mark 5:35; Luke 8:49). The request changes to raising her from the dead (Matt. 9:18).

3. *The setting.* There were some who doubted whether Jesus even needed to go to the girl since she was dead (Mark 5:35; Luke 5:49). The mourners had gathered (Matt. 9:23; Mark 5:38; Luke 8:52). There is ridicule when Jesus said the girl was sleeping (Matt. 9:24; Mark 5:39-40; Luke 8:53). Only three disciples were present, along with the girl's parents, when the miracle was performed (Mark 5:37, 50; Luke 8:51).

4. *The miracle.* Jesus took the girl by the hand (Matt. 9:35) and said, "Talatha Cumi" which means "Little girl, I say to you, arise" (Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54). Immediately, she arose and walked (Matt. 9:25; Mark 5:42; Luke 8:55).

5. *The response.* The parents were overcome with amazement (Mark 5: 42; Luke 8:56). The miracles was reported throughout the region (Matt. 9:26). Jesus instructed that the girl should be given something to eat (Mark 5:43; Luke 8:55).

**The lessons.** There are several practical lessons we learn from this story.

1. *We must swallow our pride to come to Jesus.* It took humility for this ruler of the synagogue to ask Jesus for help. He had to forsake his dignity to fall down at the feet of Jesus. We too must humble ourselves to come to the Lord (Mark 8:34; 1 Pet. 5:5-6).

2. *Strong faith.* Notice that Jairus did not say, "come and see if you can heal her." Rather, he said "she will live" (Matt. 9:18). We must believe the Lord without question and doubt. Our faith must be strong like Abraham's (Rom. 4:19). If our faith is not strong, we could be easily shaken (1 Thess. 3:2-3). We must continue to believe that the Lord's way works (Luke 18:1).

3. *There will always be some who question and doubt what the Lord can do.* Some thought there was no need to

bother the Lord if the girl was dead. Others laughed when he said she was sleeping. Today some would question whether the Lord will forgive all their sins since they have so many. Others question whether discipline (for children or church discipline) really works. Some question where the gospel alone will work. Thus, they think we need more. Others question whether the Lord's plan on marriage, divorce and remarriage is fair. Some wonder if the Bible is enough to help them through their problems. Others questions whether preaching really works (cf. Rom. 1:16-17).

4. *Sorrow is minimized if there is a resurrection* (Luke 8:52). Sorrow is natural even knowing that one will be raised (cf. John 11:35). Yet, we should not sorrow as other who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

5. *Reaction to the power of Christ*. Those who witnessed this miracle were amazed and spread the story. When we see evidence of the resurrection of Christ, we should be amazed. Our hearts should burn within us (Luke 24) as we stand in wonder and awe. We should be so dedicated to telling the story that no one could stop us (cf. Acts 4:20).

### **The Healing of the Woman with the Issue of Blood**

**The record.** This story is recorded in Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:35-34; and Luke 8:43-48.

**The story.** Four things we want to notice about this story.

1. *The woman's problem*. She had a flow of blood (Matt. 9:20; Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43). This must have been some kind of hemorrhaging (which would have made her unclean). She had the problem for twelve years (Matt. 9:20; Mark 5:25; Luke 8: 43). Physicians had not healed her (Mark 5:26; Luke 8:43). She had suffered many things because of their treatments. She spent all her living on these doctors. In return, she was no better. In fact, she was worse.

2. *The woman's action*. She merely touched the garment of Jesus (Matt. 9:20-21; Mark 5:27-28; Luke 8:44).

3. *The woman's healing*. She was made well (Matt. 9:22). The flow of blood was immediately stopped (Mark 5:29; Luke 8:44, 47).

4. *The reaction of Jesus*. He asked who touched him (Mark 5:30-32; Luke 8:45-46). The woman fell down before him telling him the whole story (Mark 5:33; Luke 8:47). Jesus told the woman that her faith had made her well and instructed her to go in peace (Mark 5:34; Luke 8:48).

**The lessons.** There are several practical lessons we learn from this miracle as well.

1. *Worthless physicians*. The physicians had taken her money, done many things for her, yet she was worse. The spiritually sick often seek the help of worthless physicians. Denominational preachers who mislead and misdirect are worthless physicians. Brethren who preach a softer message (not dealing with sin as they ought) are worthless physicians. Brethren who preach error thus misleading and misdirecting, as the denominational preachers do, are worthless physicians. Some of the popular devotional material that is read with the hope of finding edification may well prove to be worthless physicians.

2. *Miracles involved immediate cure*. It didn't take time for the woman to get better. Rather she was cured immediately. Claims of miracles today often involve someone who gets better over a period of time. That was not the case with the miracles that Jesus performed.

3. *Fear demands telling the whole truth*. The woman fell before Jesus, fearing and trembling, and told the whole story. If we fear God, we will tell the whole truth and not conceal information in an effort to mislead. When misleading is the intent, such concealing is as dishonest as outright lying. If we fear God, we will tell our real needs (as the woman did) and admit that we are seeking help. If we fear God, we will preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

4. *Strong faith*. The woman's faith had to be strong for her to think that just touching his garment would help her. Our faith needs to be that strong. Just because one has faith doesn't mean that it is as strong as it should be.

5. *At times disciples are slow to catch on*. At first, the disciples did not see the value in Jesus asking, "Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45). On the surface it would seem that he was asking simply to find out who touched him. However, his purpose was to have the woman come forth and tell that she had been healed by a miracle.

We may not always see why the Lord recorded all that he did. Yet, there must be a purpose. We may not see why the Lord demands all that he does. Yet, there must be a reason. We may not see why he didn't say or reveal more than he did. Yet, there must be an explanation.

6. *We received more than we ask*. The woman was merely wanting to be healed. However, she received more. She received a blessing of peace. God blesses us far more than we even ask. He is able to give greater than we can ask (Eph. 3:20).

A study of these two miracles should strengthen our faith.

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# Healing the Blind

Jerry R. Earnhart

Eyesight is both a remarkable and an invaluable sensory faculty, constituting an extraordinary window of blessing to the world about us. Only when we lose sight do we fully appreciate it. Loss of eyesight in biblical times usually reduces a person to poverty and begging; and not a few suffered from this plight. Ancient healing arts offered little hope for the blind. Physicians were able to cure many illnesses, but blindness did not yield to their curative powers.

The prophets of old performed many mighty feats with divine help, but not one made the blind to see. If so, not one account of a miraculous cure of blindness found its way into the annals of Old Testament history. Isaiah, however, did prophetically envision the day when the blind would see (Isa. 35:5-6). As best we can tell, it remained for Jesus, the Savior of the world, to be the first to open the eyes of the blind, not just once in some obscure place far from observing eyes, but over and over again all over Palestine in places gorged with human traffic (cf. Matt. 15:29-31; 21:14-17).

Blindness has many causes—accidents, disease, and overexposure to the elements, like wind, sun, or limestone dust. No matter the cause, whether congenital (John 9:1) or otherwise, Jesus had the cure, even in the case of a Galilean man whose blind and mute condition had its roots seemingly in demon-possession (Matt. 12:22-24).

It was on one of those many occasions when Jesus was busy curing numerous people of diseases and afflictions and giving sight to the blind that a delegation arrived from the imprisoned John the Baptist to ask anxiously of Jesus, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” (Luke 7:18-21).

Languishing in Herod’s prison, John may have wondered why Jesus as the Coming One was not hacking away in judgment at the roots of the obstinate nation and bringing order to society as he and other prophets had predicted (Luke 3:1-9; Mal. 3:1-4; 5:1-3).

Jesus gently reminded John of Isaiah’s messianic preview of coming attractions, saying to the envoys from prison, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them. Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me” (Luke 7:22-23).

Jesus would get to the judgment part in his own time. Now was the season for exposing the nation again to God’s yearning desire to show mercy and forgiveness toward those who would repent. A flood of gracious miracles performed on the plagued and suffering populous buttressed the gracious words that fell from Jesus’ lips (Luke 4:22). However, little capacity for deep and abiding faith resided in the average Israelite of Jesus’ day, the evidential value of the Lord’s miraculous healing of the blind did not totally escape his attention, but caused him to marvel and to glorify the God of Israel (Matt. 15:31). And so it was meant to be (cf. John 5:36; 20:30-31).

The New Testament chooses to put a face on a few of the blind who miraculously received their sight from Jesus, describing the circumstances leading to their cure and giving details of the response, even providing the name of one man. Undoubtedly, in these touching narratives lie valuable lessons to be learned. Otherwise, why would the Holy Spirit bother to include them? Of at least six such incidences recorded in the Gospels, this article will consider only four. The first three took place in Galilee.

## **Two Blind Men Healed in a Residence at Capernaum (Matt. 9:27-31)**

Amid rising opposition against Jesus’ ministry, two blind men followed Jesus through the streets of the city; urgently, unabashedly, and loudly announcing their pitiful plea, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” (Matt. 9:27). Like his Father (Exod. 34:6) the Son of God delighted in mercy, so once inside the house to which he was going, Jesus willingly obliged them. Better than anyone else, he

understood and empathized with their distress. Unlike many of his countrymen (Matt. 12:7), Jesus did not move among the masses with cold and heartless aloofness.

In addressing Jesus as the Son of David (a popular designation of the Messiah) these blind men demonstrated remarkable boldness, even in view of the growing public sentiment that Jesus might well be the Messiah, for the religious elite resented Jesus' popularity, viewed him as a dangerous firebrand, and were willing to wield their considerable power to scorn and cajole the populous into submission to their will (Matt. 9:3, 11, 24).

How had these men come by such faith? Being blind, they personally had witnessed none of Jesus' miracles. They found themselves in exactly the same situation as we, having to rely on the testimony of others. For a truth, "Blessed are they that did not see, and yet believed" (John 20:29). Even seeing is not necessarily believing, for many saw the miracles of Jesus and yet resisted belief in the obvious.

Graciously, Jesus touched the eyes of the blind men and said, "It shall be done to you according to your faith" (Matt. 9:29). Faith has a way of getting God's attention and opening the floodgates of his blessings (cf. Jas. 5:16; 1 John 5:14-15). Jesus was delighted to encourage and reward their request of faith. "And their eyes were opened" (Matt. 9:30) to see Jesus face to face. But with their sight came a stern warning, "See that no one knows about this" (Matt. 9:30).

Was Jesus trying to stave off a popular uprising in this hot-bed of the Zealots' movement (cf. John 6:15-27; 18:36), thus gaining more time to instruct on the spiritual nature of his kingdom (18:36) and dispel any false hopes of a political future for the nation? Whatever Jesus' motive may have been, he clearly and solemnly defined his prohibition, but it was promptly and thoroughly disregarded, perhaps because it seemed so unrealistic and unreasonable. "(T)hey went out and spread the news about Him throughout all the land" (Matt. 9:31).

How tragically revealing of the delirium to which the emotions of the human heart can fall prey! Faith and joyful actions that fall short of respect for the Lord's will do not rise above the level of contemptible sin, however unreasonable the Lord's expectations may seem to man (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). Thankfully, as the following episodes will demonstrate, not all of Jesus' miracles on the blind ended in such tragic disappointment.

### **The Healing of the Blind Man Near Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26)**

Judging from Jesus' itinerary at the time, this was prob-



Excavations at Bethsaida  
Todd Bolen, Pictorial Library of Bible Lands

ably Bethsaida of Julius in Perea, on or near the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. On a stop in Bethsaida, a city that had witnessed abundant demonstrations of Jesus' beneficent power (Luke 10:13), friends or relatives of a blind man brought him to Jesus

and begged the Lord to touch him. Jesus personally took him by the hand and led him out of town. Why? Was it to avoid the crowds?

Using spittle and the touch of his hand—a method by no means necessary for the dispensing of his power—the Lord "restored" the eyesight which this man once enjoyed (Mark 8:25). For some instructional reason known only to Jesus, the Lord chose to cure the man's blindness in a graphic, riveting two-step fashion, even if the second phase followed almost immediately upon the first. This two stage cure is unique in Jesus' healing ministry. But unlike modern day "miracle workers," Jesus did not leave the objects of his blessings either partially or superficially cured.

By sending the man home with the clear restriction, "Do not even enter the village," Jesus apparently did not want this cure published in Bethsaida at the time. No reason is given, but the fact that he was headed for the quieter environs of Caesarea Philippi to spend time with his disciples alone may indicate that he did not want a run on his cures to delay his journey. Or, it may be that Jesus felt that this community, so disinclined to believe, did not deserve any more attention (cf. Luke 10:13).

In the absence of any indication of disobedience to the Lord's instruction, perhaps we can rightly assume that this blind man, unlike two healed men in Capernaum (Matt. 8:27-31), appropriately demonstrated his gratitude and his faith in Jesus by respecting the Lord's request not to return to Bethsaida. Our gratitude, too, should not lack in obedience.

### **The Healing of Two Blind Beggars in Jericho**

A superficial reading of three different accounts of this event (Matt. 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-44) leaves the impression that they are contradictory as to the place of healing (as Jesus approached Jericho, or as Jesus left the city?), as well as to the number of blind men healed. Various harmonies have been proposed, leading this author to conclude that there is no evidence of a contradiction here, but rather much evidence of the absence of collusion—adding significantly to the credibility of the accounts.

We view the three accounts as referring to the same event, i.e., the healing of two blind men, one named Bartimaeus, as Jesus left Jericho. Bartimaeus may have first become aware of Jesus as he approached the city, but later positioned himself for the cure as Jesus, who spent the night with Zacchaeus, left the city.

In the midst of a multitude of Passover pilgrims, Jesus embarked on the last leg of his last journey to Jerusalem. An arduous fifteen-mile climb through rugged terrain lay ahead. Two blind beggars, Bartimaeus likely being more aggressive in seeking help, learned that Jesus was passing by in this throng and, having previously learned of the Lord's healing powers, desperately attempted to take advantage of his presence to have their eyesight restored. Loudly they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David" (Matt. 20:30).

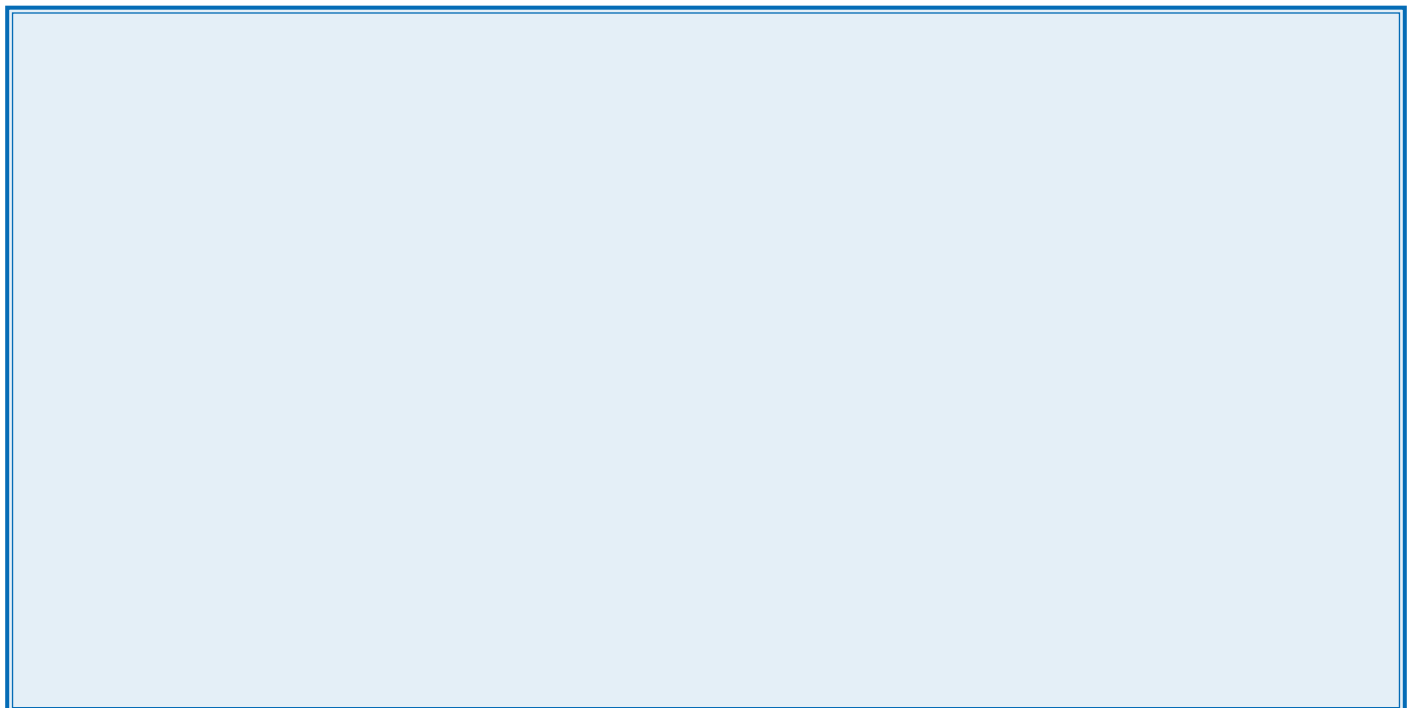
Not able to abide these pesky beggars, the "crowd sternly told them to be quiet" (Matt. 20:31). Why? For bothering the Lord with their panhandling? For ascribing, in their view, such outlandish honor to this prophet? For interrupting the serenity of the moment? Whatever the reason may have been, these beggars would not be intimidated. In fact, they increased their clamor, crying out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matt. 20:31).

What an example for us who so easily allow obstacles to discourage us! Having confidence both in Jesus' ability and in his beneficence, opposition only increased the determination of these blind men. Man may seek to dissuade us, but Jesus encourages us to come to him and seek his help (Matt. 7:7-8; 11:28).

Hearing the blind beggars' cries, Jesus stopped and called them to himself (Matt. 20:32). Bartimaeus immediately threw off his mantle, sprang to his feet, and hurried to Jesus, perhaps led only by his ear. Having been asked to specify his want, he said, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight" (Mark 10:51). We would do well to approach the cure for our spiritual blindness with the same vigor (cf. Matt. 5:6), for the same compassion that moved Jesus to restore sight to Bartimaeus and his friend (Matt. 20:34) would move him to open our eyes, too (2 Cor. 4:6; Matt. 9:36-38).

In the case of the blind men, Jesus said with authority, "Receive your sight, your faith has made you well" (Luke 18:42). Although Jesus' power was not dependent upon their faith, it was in the best interest of the cured to understand the role of faith in this and all future blessings, "and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him" (Matt. 20:34), "glorifying God" (Luke 18:43).

In their trust in the Lord these men were neither forgetful, nor superficial, nor hung up on the physical. They had eyes to see their spiritual needs, as well. Beyond that, they were willing not only to pursue the fulfillment of those needs, but also to allow that pursuit to cost them something. Not being content to simply bask in the delight of physical sight, they unhesitatingly joined the followers of Jesus in a self-sacrificing, but joyful search for the light of the soul.



# The Feeding of the Two Multitudes

Scott Finley

Within the last year of our Lord's life on earth, he miraculously fed two vast multitudes who had followed him into the wilderness. The first numbered about 5,000 men, and the second about 4,000.

The feeding of 5,000 is recorded by all four gospel writers (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:33-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14). It occurred in the spring, about the time of the Passover. Jesus had been informed of the death of his kinsman, John the Baptist, and the Twelve had just returned from their preaching trip among "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). In need of food, privacy, and rest, Jesus took the Twelve by boat from the northwestern side of the Sea of Galilee to a secluded area along the northeastern shore, near Bethsaida, slightly east of where the Jordan flows into the Lake. When the crowds on the northwest side saw Jesus and his disciples getting into the boat, and the direction they were heading, they ran along the shoreline, others joining in along the way; thus a large crowd was waiting for him when he arrived. Though tired and hungry, our Lord attended to their needs, healing the sick and teaching them many things about the kingdom of God.

As evening approached, Jesus asked Philip, "Where are we to buy bread that these may eat?" The disciples suggested that Jesus dismiss the multitude so they might go to find food for themselves. Knowing what he intended to do, and to impress on the minds of his disciples what an enormous feat it would be to feed such a vast crowd, Jesus answered them, "You give them something to eat." Then Philip replied, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." Jesus asked, "How many loaves do you have? Go look!" After he found a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish, Andrew asked, "But what are these for so many people?" Jesus seated the people in companies of about fifty on the green grass, and taking up the loaves and fish, he lifted his eyes to heaven and offered thanks. Breaking the bread, Jesus distributed the food to his disciples, who served the multitude. "They all ate and were satisfied," and had "as much as they wanted." Afterward, Jesus instructed the Twelve, "Gather up the

leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost," and they collected twelve baskets full of the leftovers. Astounded at what they had witnessed, the people said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world," and they "were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king." Perceiving this, Jesus sent the disciples away in a boat while he went alone into a mountain to pray.

Several months later, after visiting the cities of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee and entered Decapolis, a region on the southeast side of the Sea. Here also, Jesus taught many and healed their sick. Therefore, a great multitude of about 4,000 men, in addition to women and children, followed the Lord into a desolate area and remained with him three days. Unwilling to dismiss the crowd lest some faint on the way home, Jesus asked his disciples how much bread they had. Seven loaves and a few fish were found. After the people were seated on the ground, he took the food, offered thanks, and began giving the food to the apostles who distributed the bread and fish among the people. After all were completely satisfied, seven large baskets were filled with the leftovers. Dismissing the crowd, the Lord entered a boat and crossed over the Sea to the region of Magadan (or Dalmanutha) on the west side of the Lake. This event is recorded by Matthew (15:29-39) and Mark (8:1-9).

## Some Lessons

**Confirmation of Jesus' Identity and Message.** Salvation is by faith in Christ (Rom. 5:1), and these two signs, as all others he performed, confirmed the identity and message of Jesus. The cornerstone of the faith is the identity of Jesus as Christ, the Son of God. It is the rock upon which the church of Christ rests (Matt. 16:18). Faith in Christ as a result of his signs is the underlying purpose of John's gospel, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). The feeding of the 5,000 had its intended effect, "Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said,



“This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14). When Jesus turned water into wine, it “manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him” (John 2:11). In Jerusalem during the Passover feast, “. . . many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing” (John 2:23). Power to perform signs was also given to the apostles; as they carried the gospel “into all the world . . . the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed” (Mark 16:20). Jesus taught, “unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24b), and the miraculous feedings of over 9,000 hungry people gave honest hearts every reason to believe in him.

**Jesus’ Creative Power.** When Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish, he displayed absolute power over matter, and the ability to create. Jesus Christ, along with the Father and Holy Spirit, is Creator. John wrote of Christ, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3). Paul wrote to the Colossians of Christ, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him” (1:16). The author of the Hebrew letter extols God’s Son, “whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (1:2b). These miracles would have been a sign to a thoughtful witness that Jesus was much more than a prophet: he is Immanuel (“God with us,” cf. Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23).

**The Lord’s Compassion.** What motivated Jesus to feed the two great multitudes? The miracles demonstrate the great heart the Lord has for mankind. Jesus specifically said that compassion was his motive for feeding the 4,000 (Mark 8:2-3). On both occasions Jesus showed mercy toward the sick and suffering, as well as those who hungered (Matt. 14:13-14; 15:29-31). The Lord assures us that the Father is ever mindful of our physical needs (Matt. 6:32) and that Jesus “will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” (Heb. 13:5b). Peter encourages us to cast “all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

The greatest needs of man, however, are spiritual. While Jesus was glad to provide food for the two multitudes, he strongly rebuked those who came to him for carnal purposes: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal” (John 6:26-27). Moses had given “bread out of heaven” to Israel in the wilderness following the exodus, and though it sustained their bodies, it did not save their souls. The true, life-giving bread of heaven is Jesus Christ. His message (the gospel) is God’s mighty power to save, and it is the only way into heaven (John 14:6). The

feeding of the multitudes *physically* signifies his ability to feed people *spiritually*, and while the meal sustained their bodies for a few hours, the “Bread of Life” will sustain souls through all eternity.

**The Role of the Twelve.** Perhaps there is some significance (or foreshadowing) in the manner in which Jesus fed the multitudes. The Lord gave the food to the apostles, who in turn, gave it to the crowds. The same was true with the gospel, “the bread of life”; he placed it into the hands of the Twelve, and sent them out to fill the hearts of those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

**Jesus Wasn’t Wasteful.** The affluence of our age has led to much waste. Too often, the good food, clothing, furniture, and countless other good materials God has graciously given people are briefly used, and unceremoniously tossed away. Although Jesus could produce more food at any time, he said, “Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost” (John 6:12). Those who receive God’s gifts gratefully, should make good use of them. Jesus Christ wasn’t wasteful, and those who wear his name should be like him!

**Subtle Evidence.** Matthew, Mark, and John each mention that the multitude of 5,000 sat down on the grass to eat. Mark refers to the grass as “green,” while John specifies there was “*much grass*” in the place. A variety of reference works state that the only time of year when “*much green grass*” could have been found in that area and climate was the spring—which is precisely when John reveals that these events took place, “Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near” (John 6:4). The Passover was always observed in the spring. Subtle details such as these show the harmony and veracity of the Bible story.

**Church Responsibility Versus Individual Responsibility.** Some see the two miracles as authorization for the church to relieve the world’s hungry. Passages such as 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 11:27-30; 6:1-6, and others do show the local church as having responsibility toward needy saints. While the work of the church is not under consideration in the narratives of the feedings, the example of Christ is a splendid one for the Christian. As Jesus saw a need, felt compassion, and used his resources to fill it, the individual Christian should faithfully follow in his footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21; Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27).

### Conclusion

Mark informs his readers that when Jesus disembarked from the boat near Bethsaida and saw the multitude waiting for him on the shore, he felt compassion for them because “they were like sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). Things haven’t changed; souls desperately need the Good Shepherd today. By laying down his life for the sheep (John

# Jesus Walks On Water

Steve Niemeier

To properly comprehend the following discussion of Jesus walking on water please read Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; and John 6:15-21. These three accounts describe the same event but each account gives us some distinctive information that requires us to study all three to get the full benefits of the situation.

In John's account we find that Jesus was evidently very popular and may have been at the peak of his popularity as he was concerned that the crowd may take him by force to make him king. It is possible that the crowd remembered the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage as no doubt was told them by their forefathers many times and that Christ could lead them out of the hands of the Romans to whom they were subject. Whatever their thought process was, we must remember that they had just witnessed Jesus perform healings on those who were diseased (John 6:2) and fed them (about 5,000 men in number according to John 6:10) with only five barley loaves and two small fish. They also witnessed an amazing return of twelve baskets full of the fragments of the five loaves of barley after they had eaten their fill (John 6:12-13).

As a result of these unforeseen things they were ready to make Jesus a physical king and Jesus went to the mountain to pray. Many times in our lives we seem to forget that Christ was sent to this earth to be the perfect sacrifice for our spiritual well being. We get confused and want Christ to make things better physically for us. We fall into the same snare that this multitude did, and that is thinking of this life first over the life to come. Heeding the invitation of Jesus found in Matthew 11:28-30 will allow us to deal with issues of this life in the proper manner, but we should

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10:11), He provided the means by which their souls may be *fed today* with the "bread of life" (John 6:35, 44-45), and *saved in eternity* when he comes again (John 6:40).

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not expect this life to be an easy street of perfection because if that was so, why would we need heaven and the eternal peace it offers?

The pressure of dealing with this multitude was great and Jesus needed time to spend alone with his father and talk with him and seek comfort and strength from him as we all do when temptations and stressful issues enter our life. Mark's account states that he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side. He then sent the multitude away and went to the mountain. Upon finishing his time in prayer he was alone and the disciples were some three to four miles out into the sea (John 6:19). There is an important lesson for us to learn here from Jesus and that is that we need to spend time alone with God and even though we love our family and our friends, there is a time that we need be alone with our Father in Heaven. This lesson is often overlooked in the studying of this miracle and yet is one that all of us today need to do more of. Jesus went up the mountain to be alone with God. Where is your favorite place to be alone with God? Jesus had no problem letting his friends go on without him so he could spend time with his Heavenly Father. How many times have we told our family or friends that we couldn't go with them because of our need to spend time with God?

Matthew's account tells us that, while the disciples were in the middle of the sea, the boat was being tossed about by waves because the wind had become contrary. Mark's account states that the disciples were straining at rowing because the wind was against them. John records that a great wind was blowing. On a recent windy day I noticed a nearby body of water and looked at how "choppy" the water was. White caps were appearing as the water was being churned by the wind. This body of water was small compared to the Sea of Galilee yet it was disturbing to think about trying to navigate across it with the wind as it was. In visiting the Great Lakes area it is noticeable how the waves can increase and become violent when a strong wind arises. Each of us has no doubt viewed a body of water being stirred up by a strong wind. Take those pictures we have in our minds and consider that in the group of disciples there

were experienced fishermen who had no doubt experienced winds like we have seen. Yet, this wind was much stronger and evidently was a wind that even the most experienced fisherman was having difficulty in navigating.

In a time that most would have been asleep here are these disciples struggling to get across this body of water churned by a contrary wind. We have recorded in Matthew and Mark's account that it was about the fourth watch of the night (3:00 to 6:00 AM) when they see something out on the water that frightens them. Not that dealing with a rugged sea was not enough, they now see something they have never seen before out in the water. Their hearts had to be beating fast, their hands may have been very sweaty and their blood pressure was no doubt very high. What could it be that could be coming across the water? Matthew and Mark state that the disciples thought it was a ghost and they cried out with fear. Our lives are much the same way are they not? We have good days and bad days. Sometimes the sea of life is still and sometimes it is rugged. We are fooled at times thinking we can handle the rugged seas of life by ourselves because we feel we have negotiated the still seas of life very well. Then all of a sudden something happens and we do not know what we will do and our hearts began beating fast, our hands get sweaty, our blood pressure rises, and we cry out in fear. When others are asleep, we are awake trying to row across the contrary winds of life that have interrupted our peaceful voyage. In essence we forget that our talents are limited and that we are but a vessel being tossed around in the sea of life. We need the stilling hand of God through Jesus Christ to steer us.

Think of the feeling of relief that must have come over the disciples when they heard the voice of Jesus say, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." However, as it is so often with many of us, these words were not good enough for Peter. He wanted Jesus to prove himself and Matthew records this for us. Peter answered the comforting words of Jesus, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." Why Peter asked this we may never know, but he seemed to be one that spoke very quickly and I believe that Peter was a very emotional person. Just seeing Christ and wanting to be like Christ and being filled with the emotion of the moment may all have contributed to his statement. Whatever his reason was think about his excitement when Jesus said to him, "Come." Jesus has never stopped us from having faith in him. He has not limited the amount of faith we can have and here is a great example of that. Peter asked and received permission to come to Jesus even though it meant walking on the water. Jesus had no fear for he had been walking on the water even though it was very rugged. Now he doesn't prohibit Peter coming to him on this choppy water. When the storms of life seem to throw contrary winds and high waves in my face, Jesus says come and he will give me rest. He has the faith in us that we can overcome all things if we trust in him.

Now that Peter has been given permission to come to Jesus, Peter must now make a decision to get out of the safety of the boat and walk on the troubled waters to go to Jesus. He makes that decision and his great faith in Jesus allows him to walk on that water! Yes, my friend, Peter walked on that water! Can you imagine what the other disciples were saying and thinking? Here is Peter walking on the water, oh yes, we know that Jesus was walking on the water and as amazing as that was, here is Peter doing it. But then something happened. Peter saw that the wind was boisterous and he became afraid and began to sink. He began to cry out for help. Haven't we all been there? Walking with great faith and then we get hit with something that just floors us and we start to sink. We get scared and we lose faith and the next thing we know we are sinking deep into self-pity, crying out for help and recognizing that our family and friends seem to be in a safe boat in the stormy sea of life but can't save us and we are sinking under the pressure of what has been thrown our way. Jesus has invited us to follow him and stated he will give us rest. Yet, even though we strive to follow him, we get ourselves into situations that we shouldn't be in and we lose our faith in him.

As Peter began to sink after being afraid he cries out for help but he does not seek help from his friends in the boat, he seeks help from the one that he knows can save him. He cries out, "Lord save me!" Why is it that we forget who our friends and family cannot do what Christ can do? Peter was in danger and needed the help of the only one that could save him and that was the Lord. Jesus the Christ was sent to this earth to be the perfect sacrifice for us and he overcame every stormy sea that Satan could flood him with (Heb. 4:15) so that we could find the rest and peace he promised us. There is not a boisterous sea that this life has to offer that Christ cannot save us from, and yet many still try to steer through the storm alone.

Upon Peter's request for the Lord to save him, Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter and saved him. Jesus said to Peter upon saving him, "O ye of little faith, why do you doubt?" There is a question that I am sure that Peter had trouble answering. He had walked on the water and then sank because he became afraid. How could there even be an answer to that question? The question answered itself, little faith was the answer! Thus we have a lesson being taught us by the walking on the water by Jesus the Christ. Our faith will allow us to walk on the troubled and boisterous waters of this life by having great faith in Jesus. He has walked on these waters and he made it safely and we can too! We are only limited by our lack of faith.

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat the wind ceased and the disciples worshiped Jesus and stated that truly he was the Son of God. This miracle of walking on the water is a miracle that we can gain strength from today. While

## “Demonic” continued from front page

### The Unclean Spirit

In verses 23 and 24, while Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, there was present a man with an unclean spirit. What is an unclean spirit? If we compare Matthew 8:28 to Mark 5:1-2, we find that in two parallel accounts what one inspired writer calls an unclean spirit another refers to as a demon. To the modernist, there never has been any such thing as real demons, but this was just an ancient, superstitious way of explaining mental illness or other natural conditions. However, if we accept the Bible as truth, we must believe that at least in Bible times, demons did exist and were active. So, what were demons? We really do not know. Many think that perhaps they were fallen angels (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). The Bible does mention that the devil has angels to do his bidding (Matt. 12:22-29; 25:41). There may be a lot about demons or unclean spirits that we do not know, but Bible believers accept the fact that they were allowed to be on earth and inhabit people.

The unclean spirit asked if Jesus had come to destroy him. In another instance, demons asked Jesus, “Have You come here to torment us before the time?” (Matt. 8:29). It is reasonable to conclude that while the demons were allowed to be active on earth in that day, there was coming a time when they would be bound or limited and thus their ability to inhabit and control individuals would be destroyed. In fact, it is specifically said that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Also, this unclean spirit knew who Jesus was. He obviously believed in Jesus because he called him the Holy One of God. We learn from this that true, saving faith is more than just believing in Jesus and acknowledging him as divine. “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble!” (Jas. 2:19).

### The Healing

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit. The word translated “rebuke” here is found only in the gospels. Its original

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we were not there, we are in a dangerous place and that is this world. 1 John 2:15-17 tells us of the rugged waves that Satan will use against us. These are the things of this world that snare us but this same Jesus who walked on water stated in John 16:33, “I have overcome the world.” Satan can only cause me to sink if I lose faith in Jesus the Christ. The story of Jesus walking on the water and Peter seeking permission to come to Jesus and actually walking on water himself, should give me encouragement to overcome the temptations of this life that will weaken my faith by looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).

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definition was to place honor upon. Then it came to mean adjudge, and finally to signify to chide, reprove, or censure severely. Jesus rebuked the winds, a fever, and evil spirits (Matt. 8:26; Luke 4:39; 9:42). A different word that means convict or refute is used for situations in which we are told, “Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all” (1 Tim. 5:20; cf. Tit. 1:13). However, in our rebuking, we must make sure that we are giving the rebuke of the Lord and not just our own (Jude 9). Next, Jesus told the unclean spirit to come out. It is obvious that Jesus had the power to cast out the unclean spirit. The fact is that Jesus used this same power on many other occasions (Matt. 4:23-25). Also, he gave his apostles and others this power as well (Mark 16:17-18).

What was the purpose of such miracles? The signs that Jesus performed, like casting out demons, are recorded “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). With regard to others who were guided by the Holy Spirit in revealing the word, their message “was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will,” which included casting out unclean spirits (Heb. 2:3-4). These passages teach us that unclean spirits were allowed to be on earth and do what they did in Bible times to show the power of Christ and his inspired messengers over Satan, thus confirming the message of the gospel as being of divine origin. When Jesus cast out this unclean spirit, it convulsed the man. Evidently, unclean spirits sometimes did this (Mark 9:20). This may simply be the demon’s “last hurrah” before surrendering to the power of Christ.

### The Effect

When the people saw this, they were all amazed. There are three main words that are used in the New Testament to describe supernatural actions which set aside natural laws, as performed by Christ, his apostles, and others. They are “miracles, wonders, and signs” (Acts 2:22). The word “miracle” means “power” and identifies the source of the action as being from God. The word “sign” means “mark or indication” and identifies the purpose of the action as a token of divine authority. The word “wonder” means “something strange” and identifies the effect of the action as causing the beholder to marvel. In their amazement, the people wondered, “What new doctrine is this?” They correctly understood why God enabled people in New Testament times to perform miracles such as casting out demons. It was to show that their “new doctrine” was approved of God.

Christ came preaching, not the Old Testament law, but something different, the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 1:23). Therefore, he performed miracles (Matt. 11:1-6). In like manner, he sent his apostles out to preach that same new gospel (Mark 16:15-16). They also were empowered to



perform signs and wonders (Acts 2:43). However, we now have “that which is perfect” in contrast to the miraculous which is said to be “in part” (1 Cor. 13:8-10). God’s revelation of his will is now complete. There is nothing new to preach, and Paul says, “If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:9). If there is no new gospel to preach, then there is no need for the miracles, wonders, and signs. One other effect of the casting out of this unclean spirit is that Jesus’ fame spread throughout all the region of Galilee. Today, his fame is spread abroad not by people who perform miracles but by those who preach nothing “among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

### Conclusion

Even though unclean spirits are no longer allowed to inhabit people personally today and thus no one has the power to cast them out, there are some important lessons that we can learn from the biblical accounts of those unclean spirits which did actually exist in the first century. One lesson is that the power of Christ is greater than the power of Satan. The devil may not operate directly and miraculously as he did in Bible times, such as through unclean spirits, but he is still active. He has false ministers (2 Cor. 11:13-15). He is the tempter (1 Thess. 3:5). He is as dangerous as a roaring lion who goes about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Yet, he is limited or bound as pictured in Revelation 20:1-3. He cannot force us to sin, and in Christ we can find the power to order our lives in such a way that we do not give place to the devil (Eph. 4:27). Yet, when we do yield, Christ has the power to cleanse us so that we might be free from sin and be servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18). Thanks be to God that he gives his children power over Satan.

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### “Withered Hand” continued from page 2

wonders, and various powers calculated to excite wonder and amazement from those who witnessed them. This passage also shows the design of miracles. They were signs or divine testimonies in behalf of the truth from God, given to Christ and his servants to confirm that their teachings were from God. The origin of miracles is by the power of God himself, through the Holy Spirit.

A miracle then, either transcends natural law or suspends it in order to achieve an effect desired by the Lord. The term should not be used lightly.

### What Was the Purpose of Christ’s Miracles?

The miracles of Jesus established the truthfulness of his

claim to be the Son of God. The Gospel of John gives us the purpose of Christ’s miracles, “Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31, NKJV). Jesus Christ performed miracles to cause his hearers to believe that he was the Son of the living God.

### Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath

Jesus Christ and his disciples were traveling through the Judean countryside on the Sabbath. Christ’s disciples were hungry and began to pluck the heads of grain and eat. The teachings and miracles of Jesus had caused the Pharisees and the Jewish leadership to hate him. They envied his success and hated his teaching concerning the Law of Moses and the new covenant that he was about to institute. The Pharisees were dogging the steps of Christ, to collect materials for a charge of impiety against Christ. We see the malice the Pharisees had against our Savior; when they could find no crime to charge him with, they jump at this supposed violation of the rules for Sabbath observance. The disciples, because of necessity, took grain to eat as they passed through the fields. This they were allowed to do by the Law of Moses (Deut. 23:25), and no one found fault with them for it, only it happened to be the Sabbath, and therefore the Pharisees saw an opportunity to renew an old quarrel. When envy and malice can find no occasion of quarrel, they will invent one, against the innocent.

What was God’s law concerning the Sabbath? God having created the world in six days, “rested” on the seventh day. God sanctified and appointed the seventh day as the “Sabbath” a day of worship. “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you” (Deut. 5:12, NKJV). The Sabbath was to be a day of prayers, praise, thanksgiving, and public and private worship of God. The ordinary business of life is to be wholly laid aside. The Law of Moses clearly forbids all uses of the day which are worldly. “You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people” (Exod. 31:14, NKJV). Christ shows the Pharisees that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on the Sabbath. The Law allowed attending the sick, relieving the poor, helping those who need speedy relief, and these acts performed with love and charity shall be accepted by the Lord.

Jesus concludes this discussion by the statement, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt. 12:8). Jesus Christ as the Son of God has power and authority over the Sabbath. He made it, and he is the one to whom worship is to be devoted. If it was right for David to appease his hunger, and for the priests to do what was needed for the worship of God in the temple, much more was it right for

the disciples, in attending upon the Lord of the Sabbath, to appease their hunger as they did on the Sabbath.

### **The Miracle of the Withered Hand**

The dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath continues in *their* synagogue. The word “synagogue” signifies an assembly, a building in which the children of Israel assembled for the worship of God.

This claim of Jesus that he was the “Son of Man” and the master (Lord) of the Sabbath and so above the Pharisaic regulations concerning the Sabbath angered the Pharisees extremely. By the phrase “the Lord of the Sabbath,” Jesus claims the Messiahship, but as the “Son of Man,” he affirms his solidarity with mankind, “standing for human interest.”

This incident in their synagogue was noteworthy, and therefore it is mentioned with a “behold.” It was remarkable that so very soon a case occurred to bring up again their dispute concerning the Sabbath. Did the Pharisees bring the man with the withered hand into the synagogue so as to raise the question in a practical form? Taught by their experience in the grain field, they changed their bold assertion, and approached the subject with a guarded question, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” hoping to get an answer that could be used as a ground for an accusation against Christ. The scribes and Pharisees were not looking for the truth, but “that they might accuse him” (Matt. 12:10) before the local judge, the officers of the synagogue, or the Jewish council. A violation of God’s law concerning the Sabbath was a capital crime, “You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death” (Exod. 31:14, NKJV).

The man who is brought before Christ has a “withered hand.” The hand had dried up from insufficient absorption of nutriment, until its power was gone, and there was no remedy known to man by which this condition could be restored. This disease results in a loss both of size and in power of the arm. Luke 6:6 says that it was the man’s right or dominate hand, which made the affliction greater.

Jesus confutes the Pharisees from their own practice, telling them that they themselves judged it lawful to help out a sheep, or an ox, if fallen into a pit on the Sabbath; how much more ought the life of a man to be preferred. The Pharisees condemned themselves by what they allowed. How could they blame Jesus for working a merciful and miraculous cure upon this poor man on the Sabbath? The ceremonies of the law are not against the love of our fellow human beings. Christ shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on the Sabbath. The Law of Moses permitted the attending of the sick, relieving the poor, and helping the needy.

Luke records the overwhelming nature of Christ’s argument. “Then Jesus said to them, ‘I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?’” (Luke 6:9, NKJV). The argument is this, Whatsoever is necessary to save the life of a man, may be done on the Sabbath; if an individual should refuse to help someone in need when it is within his power, in the sense of God’s law, he is guilty of murder.

Jesus told the man with the withered hand, “Stretch out your hand!” The man obeyed, and his hand returned to normal, like the other hand. At the command of Jesus the man with the withered hand made the effort to straighten his hand, and in making the effort his cure was affected. The man might have said that he had no strength; that it was a thing which he could not do. Faith disregards apparent impossibilities, where there is a command and promise of God.

Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God with divine authority and divine power; by his ability to heal a disease that was incurable by human power he proved his claim. Jesus Christ truly is “Lord of the Sabbath.”

The Pharisees because of the hardness of their hearts refuse to see that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God and the savior of the world. They continued to conspire to destroy Christ.

### **The Spiritual Message!**

Man by his sinful nature has hands that are withered, and we are unable of ourselves to save our souls. Christ only, by the power of his grace, can save us from our sins. Christ willingly left heaven and came to this earth and lived as a man. He died the most cruel and shameful death known to man, for our sinful condition. Jesus offers salvation to all. “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned’” (Mark 16:15-16, NKJV). Everyone who wants salvation must have the same faith that the man with the withered hand had, we must believe in the power of Jesus Christ to save our soul and be willing to obey Christ in baptism to demonstrate our faith to God.

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#### **Preacher Needed**

**Wakulla, Florida:** The church of Christ at Wakulla is located 15 miles south of Tallahassee. They are seeking a full-time gospel preacher to work with a non-institutional congregation who can provide part of his own support. They have a membership of approximately 35. Wakulla is one of the fastest growing counties in Florida with good schools. If interested, contact Willard Waldrop at 850-509-9158; email: [wwwtilsnake@comcast.net](mailto:wwwtilsnake@comcast.net) or Joe Walker 850-420-8051; email: [wimpyjoe@comcast.net](mailto:wimpyjoe@comcast.net).





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