

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

Lesson Two: Christ, The Miracle Worker

When the apostles went forth to preach the gospel to the whole creation, part of their message was that Jesus performed undeniable miracles. This was part of the evidence presented to substantiate their claim of His Lordship. On Pentecost Peter declared, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36).

The Gospel of John was written to reveal a selection of miracles to produce faith in the readers. "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). There are three monumental words in this passage: signs, believe, and life. In the signs is the revelation from God; in belief is the reaction that they are designed to produce; in life is the result that belief brings.

Signs are indicators of something. In this case they are the miracles Jesus performed publicly. They illustrate areas of His power. Collectively the miracles bear witness to the central doctrine of the gospel, His Deity. John tells of seven in addition to the resurrection. These seven miracles operated precisely in the areas where man is unable to effect any change of laws or conditions which affect his life. In these areas Jesus proved Himself potent where man is impotent, and the works He did testify to His supernatural ability.

Belief is the key word in this gospel. The verse says "that ye may believe." This would indicate the writer's purpose was to produce belief. Another translation reads, "that ye may continue to believe." That would suggest that John's purpose was to strengthen the faith of those who were already believers. The gospel record will certainly do either or both of these. So why try to make a distinction. Our study will serve both purposes.

John records seven miracles performed by the Lord. Each is different which shows

that John selected these seven to show the wide range of the Lord's abilities. The first was changing water into wine (John 2:1-11). This event transcends the normal courses of nature. Jesus is Master of all material substance. He created all things (John 1:1-3). It was no difficulty for Him to alter matter as He willed. He demonstrated He is Master over quality. Whatever Jesus does far surpasses anything man can do. This was a manifestation of His glory. It proves Him to be God in the flesh, and produced or increased the faith in His disciples (John 2:11).

The story of the nobleman's son revealed the Lord's power to perform miracles from afar (John 4:46-50). Rather than taking a journey to the nobleman's house, Jesus told the man to go back, and that the boy would live. When the man returned home he inquired of the boy's recovery. "So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth..." (John 4:53). The Lord connects faith to this sign (4:48). As the man made his journey home, he had not seen a sign of his request being answered. Christ had promised. That was enough. His faith grew as more evidence was presented.

The healing of the crippled man (John 5:1-9), shows that time was no factor to Jesus. The man had been crippled for 38 years, but that made no difference to Jesus. Jesus tested the man's faith by giving him a command that was physically impossible. "Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked" (John 5:9). Jesus stressed that His purpose was intended to cause the honest mind to believe (John 5:21-24). He can bring men to eternal life. By faith that can be ours.

Jesus fed over five thousand people with five loaves and two fish (John 6:1-14). A more startling proof of the creative power of Jesus cannot be imagined. Christ, the Bread of life, is the theme of this whole chapter. Nothing sheds more light on the wonder revealed than the deduction of the people. "When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth, the prophet that cometh into the world" (John 6:14). Jesus also completely provides for man's spiritual needs. John clearly sees the miracle as a symbol of

Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6:33-35). Jesus has been offering His food to men, but they have not accepted it (John 6:26,30).

The same night as the miraculous feeding, Jesus walked on the water to His disciples in a boat (John 6:16-21). It affected only the apostles. Jesus' purpose was to teach them to trust in God. This explains His repeated admonition to "Be not afraid."

John's next example is Jesus giving sight to the blind (John 9:1-7). This was one of the thoroughly examined miracles recorded. The Jewish leaders sought to do everything they could to discredit it. Thus the whole chapter is devoted to the healing of a man born blind and the aftermath. The man's blindness provided an opportunity to manifest the work of God. John had introduced Jesus, "in him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). This event represents that truth. When the man regained his sight, he was led to believe (John 9:35-38). Before this, the man only knew that Jesus was a prophet. Openness to Christ brings life, light, and divine blessings. Refusal brings judgment. "For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind" (John 9:39). Those who claimed to be enlightened refused Jesus and were lost by their self-imposed blindness.

The last of the signs was the raising of Lazarus (John 11:25-45). Lazarus and his sisters were close friends of Jesus. Lazarus became sick and his sisters asked Jesus to come (John 11:3,4). Jesus purposely delayed until Lazarus died. Then Jesus went to raise Lazarus and produce faith. "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him" (John 11:15). Jesus prayed that those who witnessed the raising would believe. "Because of the multitude around...that they may believe..." (John 11:42). His purpose was fulfilled. "Many therefore of the Jews, who came...and beheld that which he did, believed on him" (John 11:45). In this miracle is the proof that Jesus is what He claimed. "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

The good news is salvation which comes to those who believe. "Whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Will we believe? That is God's requirement. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyed not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

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