

Miracles of Jesus 12-04-22a

This is Sunday, the 22nd of April, 2012. We begin our study this morning of the miracles and parables of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're going to start with the miracles and progress through the illustrative stories that Jesus used to make his purpose and mission clear.

His calling from the Father, the call through him to the people of Israel and ultimately to all of us. But the study we undertake this morning is a very interesting one. It is a great way to review the Lord Jesus Christ in his first advent, in his coming to this earth, in establishing through these signs and wonders the authenticity, the veracity of his person and his message.

They are manifestations empowered by God the Holy Spirit, designed to communicate. And it's our goal as we look at them, not just to see what happened, but what is the truth that is communicated by these things. And what is our goal ultimately in looking at these things? We see the miracles, we undertake to find the truth and the message that they convey.

With the result that, we live in a way that is pleasing to God more so than when we started. We want to progress, we want to advance. As we saw in our Thessalonian study, we want to abound more and more.

And there is plenty of motivation, there is plenty of insight, there is plenty of grace from God in these actions of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing better than looking full in the face of the Lord Jesus and seeing him as the Word of God personified. It is the best that it gets in the Word of God.

The only thing better than this is when we will join him in the air and ever be with the Lord. But to look at him at first hand, to hear his words, to see his actions, fully representing God in bodily form, this is the cream of the cream. So we're excited to begin this study.

It will move rapidly. It is my goal to cover one miracle per session. And these things are not light fare, so prepare for a rather rapid movement without leaving out any details that I know of, which means I will not have the luxury of digression or trailing rabbits.

We're hunting the big game on these, so I just warn you now that there will be a great deal of economy if I can manage it, which, pray for me. So with that as an introduction, let's go to the Lord in prayer and we will begin. Father, what a wonderful blessing it is for us to have the freedom and the opportunity to spend time together with the express purpose of fellowship, of receiving the blessings that come from the presence of your Spirit, your Son, the Lord Jesus, in our midst and your own blessing and presence in our fellowship.

We thank you for your Word, for the truth that it contains, how it transcends even its own text to bring us the truth without adulteration, without any diminishment, without any dilution. We have everything we need in your Word through the power of your Spirit to live the life to which we have been called, to grow in grace and knowledge and to reach that place of fulfillment and function that you have called us to in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for Him.

We thank you for His past ministries on our behalf, most fully and completely in achieving our salvation through His work on the cross and His current ministry of intercession and expectation as He awaits the Word from you to come and receive us to Himself. We thank you for the passage that we have before us this morning and we ask your blessing on us as we study it together. May each one of us find pertinency and application in these truths.

May they stick with us and be something that God the Holy Spirit can motivate and encourage us with in the days ahead. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Turn with me to John chapter 2. John chapter 2. In looking at the recorded miracles of the Lord Jesus, John tells us late in his gospel that so many things were said and done by the Lord that if you tried to write them all down, the earth couldn't contain the books. Thankfully, heaven does and when we remove from this earth and get into the more eternal realms, we will have a vastly expanded Bible and much more opportunities to learn and to expand our understanding. But the ones that are contained in this record are enough, more than enough, more than we could possibly exhaust.

But, of the recorded miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ in His coming to this earth in human flesh, there are 35 major events. You could add some that we would not consider major. I think they're all major, but things like knowledge, knowing what someone is thinking, being able to tell someone things that one would not know unless he were supernaturally enabled.

But these are the major miracles where something substantial and of a sign value takes place. So we're going to take these seriatim one by one. We're going to look at the first two this morning.

We'll look at the first one in the first session. We'll look at the second one in the second session. So miracle number one, chronologically speaking, the first one we know of is the transformation of water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana, John chapter 2. This is specifically John chapter 2 verses 1 through 11.

Some of these sign miracles are recorded in more than one gospel and we'll note that as we progress where the records are. We'll try to glean all of the details we can from each account. This first miracle is recorded only by John.

John was an eyewitness to this miracle and many of the details that we see in the story reflect his presence, his firsthand knowledge of what took place. In fact there were very few people who actually knew of this first miracle and we'll see as we go forward why that is. So let's take a look at the account itself.

This will read us in. Most of us have a fair amount of familiarity with this. But let me establish just a little bit of background before we read it, which is a summary of the latter part of John chapter 1. Beginning at verse 19 you see the priests and Levites coming out and hearing the testimony of John the Baptist.

You know chapter 1 begins with a theological introduction. In the beginning was the Word. Then it moves into the career of John the Baptist as the forerunner, as the great last final Old Testament prophet.

He is fully Old Testament. He dresses like an Old Testament prophet. He lives like an Old Testament prophet.

He prophesies like an Old Testament prophet. He sums up and embodies the witness of the entire Old Covenant period. And the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are you? One would think that the priests and Levites of all people would know who John was, would be able to recognize his prophetic ministry by its content, by its outward signs.

But they have to come and ask. And this itself is sort of a symptom of some of the problems in Jerusalem. He testified and did not deny, but confessed, I am not the Christ.

They asked him, what are you then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the Prophet? He answered, no. They said, well who are you that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself? You can imagine those who sent would have been perhaps the Sanhedrin, the chief priests.

They're not going to come out there and imperil their dignity by granting some sort of weight to John the Baptist. But they're greatly curious because all the region is going out to him to be baptized. He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Make straight the way of the Lord as the Prophet Isaiah said. Those who were sent from the Pharisees asked him, saying, why do you baptize if you're not the Christ, you're not Elijah, you're not the Prophet? John answered, saying, I baptize with water, but there stands one among you whom you do not know. Jesus is present on this day.

He says, there stands one among you whom you do not recognize. It is he who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan where John was baptizing.

You probably have a text note in your Bible that most of the earlier and better

manuscripts, in fact, our earliest and best, by far, manuscripts do not say Bethabara. This seems to be a later addition. It's Bethany, Bethany.

Almost certainly, this is Bethany. Now, not the Bethany, not the one that's on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. This is Bethany beyond Jordan.

And as early as the fourth century, when they looked for this town, they couldn't find it. They said, well, it must be a mistake. So they tried to find a town that would fit, and they put in Bethabara.

But at this time, there was a place called Bethany. Bethany, you can tell by looking at it, has an Aramaic or Hebrew origin in terms of a name, Beit Ani. And this is sort of the evil I in there.

And Ani or Aniyah, Beit Aniyah, can mean either house of dates or house of misery. I think since we have two or three towns named Bethany, it's not house of misery. You have a few towns that have names that are sort of dismal, but the popularity of this and I think the prevalence of fruit growing and produce, this is house of dates.

You remember in other stories, you've got Bethany and Bethphage. Of course, Bethphage is house of figs. So you've got the house of dates and house of figs.

And of course, these are your staples. These are the things that people could find and live on and enjoy. I'm not a big fan of dates myself.

I can get by on figs if you put them inside that little Newton. But just straight figs is kind of rough for me as well, but I wasn't brought up in the Middle East. So John is out there and Jesus is there.

This is day one. The evening and the morning were the first day. There is one standing among you.

The next day is given to us in John 1.29. The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God. We sang the hymn this morning. There is power in the blood of the Lamb.

This is Amnos, the word here and this is specifically the Passover Lamb. This is a lamb of the first year. In the New Testament, this word is always used either directly or indirectly of the Lord Jesus as of a lamb without spot or blemish.

But it's Amnos, as here, is always in some way connected with the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. This is the Passover Lamb of God, a lamb of the first year. It could be either of the goats or the sheep.

It takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a man, i.e., yesterday. John bore witness.

I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and remaining upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me. And this again is know in the sense of recognize.

It doesn't mean John never saw Him or didn't know His name. There's evidence that they were cousins. But He says, I didn't recognize Him in the same way that He says there's one standing among you that you don't recognize.

Until He saw the Spirit descend, and this is confirmation, this is testimony from heaven, upon whom you've seen the Spirit descending, remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God. Now this is important, this background to our miracle.

We need this information. It's no accident that chapter 2 comes after chapter 1. So this is the second day, John 1.29. John identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God, as the Son of God. In chapter 1, verse 35, again the next day.

What day would this be? The third day. The third day, John stood with two of his disciples, and looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, look, the Lamb of God. This is the third time and the third day that John the Baptist has specifically identified Jesus.

First day, He's in the midst but can't be seen. Second day, He says, here's the man that I saw the Spirit descending on. And on the third day, He says, there He is.

Specifically to these two disciples. Now He identified Him to the crowd at large. On the third day, He identifies Him to these two disciples who we find out are John and Andrew.

John and Andrew. Now, why are John and Andrew standing there as disciples of John the Baptist? They are seekers. They are not from around here.

They're not from beyond the Jordan. They're not from this unknown location town of Bethany. They're from Galilee, right? They're from north of the Sea of Galilee.

We know Peter is from up there and so is Andrew, his brother. We know John and James are fishermen. What are they doing way down here? They have heard of the ministry of this prophet and responded to it.

They have come all the way. They've left their business. They've left their nets and their boats.

They have come down and are listening to and heeding the testimony of John the Baptist. It is not an accident that these men are the first two disciples of the Lord Jesus, because they were already disciples of the prophet. And you see here a model for what's going to happen in the first generation of the church.

Your first generation of the church are those who were already pushing forward as

believers in the Old Testament sense. So, they follow Jesus, Jesus turning and seeing them, and following says to them, what do you seek? John basically hands off these disciples. He says, look, there's the Lamb of God, and so they start following Jesus.

They are after the truth. And what is the basis of this? Have they seen the Spirit descending? Have they seen John do a miracle? Have they seen Jesus do a miracle? They have responded and they are following based on what? This is key. Don't miss it.

Why are these men following? They believe the word of testimony. They are seeking. When they hear the word, they recognize it for truth.

When they hear John the Baptist, they say, this guy has got it, I'm sticking around. When he says, there's the Lamb of God, they follow based on that word alone. There's been no sign, no miracle, no manifestation, no heavenly dove descending, no tongues of fire.

They respond to the word, and they are already following Jesus. Jesus' first two disciples what a privilege. What an amazing thing.

You have to be impressed with John and Andrew that based on just this testimony, they are now following the Lord Jesus. And the Lord Jesus looks and sees them and says, what do you seek? He knows they are seekers. He says, well, what are you looking for? They say to him, Rabbi, which is to say teacher, where are you staying? We are wanting to make some long-term plans to follow you.

He says, come and see. They came and saw where he was staying. They remained with him that day, 10th hour on the third day.

One of the two who heard John was Andrew. He finds his brother Simon. We found the Messiah, brought him to Jesus.

When Jesus looked at him, he said, you are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Kephas, which is the Aramaic word for rock. The following day, verse 43, this is day four.

Read that story. You find that Jesus meets Philip and Nathanael, and they become followers. Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no deceit.

This is Nathanael. This is Natan, gift of God, Nathanael, who by the way is also Nathanael Bartholomew. He is Nathanael the son of Bartholomew.

And so you find him called Bartholomew in a few passages. Same guy, Nathanael is Bartholomew. And Philip and Bartholomew are, when Jesus sends the disciples out in pairs, you've got Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew.

These two guys seem to have been close friends. Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel.

He figures this out the first day he meets Jesus. Based on what? The word of testimony. The word of testimony.

These five men are following Jesus based on nothing more than recognition of the truth of the word. This sets up our episode in chapter 2 because it told us that Jesus was wanting to go to Galilee up in verse 43, and he found Philip and said, follow me. And Philip grabs Nathanael and they meet.

And so then Jesus proceeds on this trip to Galilee. And these men say, wow, isn't this great, we're from Galilee. And this is where Jesus is going to go.

Well, it's a two-day trip. Due to distances, average walking time and so on. And this is why it says in chapter 2 verse 1, on the third day.

So we have an account of day 1, day 2, day 3. Day 4 is when he meets Philip and Nathanael. Day 5 and 6 are travel from Bethany to Galilee, specifically all the way up to Cana. Cana is up a ways.

It's north of Nazareth. So when we start chapter 2 on the third day, this is the third day after the last day that was mentioned, the following day of verse 43. So we're now in John's account on day 7. This is day 7. 7 is the number of completion.

This is the number of fulfillment. This is God's number of perfection. And it is also called the third day.

So you've got a set of four days and then you've got sort of a mysterious three days. Two days where we don't see Jesus. Let me say that again.

Two days where we don't see Jesus. He's en route to a place. And then on the third day, we see him again.

You might be able to remember some other episodes where Jesus seems to be invisible for two days and appears on the third. It's the seventh day, by the way, crucifixion week, passion week. You've got a seven day set there, don't you? And where does he start out? Saturday night.

Place called? Where does Mary, Martha and Lazarus live? Bethany. Starts out in Bethany. Goes for seven days and is doing resurrection appearances seven days later.

So there is a sort of a symmetry here. On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding.

And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine. Jesus said to her, woman, what does your concern have to do with me? And this is not rude. This is a common form of address.

These are the first words we find Jesus addressing to his mother. When we see the last words he addresses to her at the cross, what does he call her? Woman, behold your son, right? So he's not being rude. This is just, they didn't say mom.

They would just say woman, mistress. I'm not sure how we have an equivalent. My hour has not yet come.

Interesting phrase. Occurs five times in the Gospel of John. Jesus makes reference to the fact that his hour is not yet, his hour has not come.

And then three times in the Gospel of John, he says, now is the hour. My time has come. But Mary undeterred, by the way, it doesn't say Mary here, does it? It says his mother.

John in the Gospel of John never names himself and never names the mother of Jesus. Little interesting note is this. It's modesty.

It is sort of a hidden thing. But John never names himself, never names Mary. But we know that's who it is.

His mother says to the servants, whatever he says to you, do it. Now there were set there six water pots of stone. By the way, why would Mary say this? I've often scratched my head over this.

Why would Jesus say whatever he says, I mean Mary's the mother of Jesus, why would she say this to the servants? Evidently she has some authority. Weddings were done by the family of the groom, these feasts. And this, by the way, is before the consummation of the marriage.

But the bridegroom's family is in charge of this. And you can see that detail later on when the head of the feast talks to the bridegroom about this great wine. He's talking to the groom because he's sort of responsible, he and his family.

But Mary seems to be related or in some way in authority because the servants apparently aren't going to respond to Jesus except that Mary says, whatever he says, you do it. Now they have instructions from somebody qualified to give them instructions, so she seems to be somehow related to this. But why does she say, whatever he says, do it? When he says, my time is not yet, she doesn't seem to think that this is a deal breaker.

She still has faith and she has confidence that Jesus will do it. And she will act in some way. So she basically doesn't take no for an answer.

And you notice many of the women in the Bible are of this persuasion. They don't take no for an answer. Jesus even tells a parable about this.

The persistent woman, the unfortunate widow, going to the judge and the judge says,

well, you have Hannah, I mean throughout the Bible. These women who say, yes, I know that the crumbs are for the children, but the ones that fall off the table we can get, right? And Jesus says, great is your faith. Well, his mother was of this persuasion as well.

She is not, she knows him well enough to know that he's not going to leave this situation unaddressed. So she tells the servants, you know, she's expecting Jesus to do something and that he's going to need help. And she's thinking ahead.

Not only does Mary expect Jesus to help, but she plans on it. She acts on it. She tells the servants, you get ready because he's going to be giving you instructions.

This is not just hopeful faith. This is active faith, isn't it? I am going to act. I'm going to take steps based on what I believe to be true in God's plan and purpose.

No accident that God chose this lady to be the mother of the Lord. No accident. That's the kind of woman she is.

Interesting also, if you want to make a note here of Genesis chapter 41 verse 55. Genesis 41, if you just think about the geography of Genesis, in the 40s you have Joseph as a vizier in Egypt. And when the dream is interpreted, famine is coming, what does Pharaoh say to his servants? Whatever he says, do it.

Mary knows this story and she almost quotes Joseph's situation, what Pharaoh says about Joseph. Whatever he says, when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, go to Joseph.

Whatever he says to you, do. One more connection between Joseph and the Lord Jesus. Now there were set six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing 20 or 30 gallons apiece.

Depending on who you talk to in terms of leaders and capacity and translating modern to current, these could have been anywhere from 10 gallons to 30 gallons. It's sort of indeterminate. It's a lot of liquid.

They are made of stone and they contain water, water of purification. Jesus said to them, fill the water pots with water and they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast.

They took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom and he said to them, every man at the beginning sets out good wine. When the guests have well drunk, then the inferior.

You have kept the good wine until now. This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him. Well, stone water pots,

stone tables of the law, water of washing and purification, Old Testament law, ritual is in view here.

There's a lot of symbolic value. Jesus could have done anything. Jesus didn't have to use these stone water pots.

He didn't have to use the water. He said, you'll see there's a big pile of wine skins out there full of new wine. Just bring those in and distribute it to the feast.

Jesus could have filled everybody's cup like David. My cup runneth over. There's a table set before me.

The cups could have just started running over with wine. It could have been like the widow's cruise of oil and every time somebody drank, they just filled back up and nobody ran out. They didn't need any more.

Jesus specifically chooses this method of provision because it communicates and he turns water and water has a lot of symbolic value. The Bible begins by talking about water. You can't get three verses into Genesis without finding water.

It is the water of judgment. It is the water of chaos. It is the water that has as yet no life, no abundance.

Darkness is on the face of the deep. The Spirit of God moves across the face of the waters. What's the first time you see water in any significant quantities? Noah, who by the way also is the inventor of wine.

Noah, water, wine. When's the first time you see the transformation of water in the Bible? Moses sticks his staff in the Nile and what happens to the water? It turns into something. What? Blood.

What does the wine in the cup represent? This cup is the new covenant in my blood. A lot of Old Testament significance to water. The law.

By the law comes the knowledge of sin, sin, righteousness, judgment. The world is judged by water. It takes water to wash clean, this judgment of the filth of the flesh, this water of purification, washing of water by the word.

That tree planted by the rivers of water, that's the word which enables life. Notice these are stone water pots of purification and he says, fill them up. What's the problem with these pots? Why aren't they already full? Some of it's been used up or maybe they weren't full to begin with, but these pots are not full enough for Jesus' purposes, are they? He tells the servants, take and fill these to the brim.

They don't have enough water. And you can imagine this is no small task. These things, water, this could be something on the order of 30 to 39 liters and a liter weighs a

kilogram and that's 2.2 pounds.

So if this is 10 gallons, we're talking these things could be 80 pounds each, not counting the stone, 100-pound jugs of water. This is going to be a two-man lift getting these things in and back. They must have had a source of water nearby, either a very good well or living water.

But they fill them to the brim. Then he says, draw out and take it to the master of the feast. This story, by the way, I've mentioned this before, but we don't really have straight narrative.

We find out what is happening by the record of conversations. There's three conversations. The first one is Jesus and His mother.

The second one is Jesus and the servants. And the third conversation is the master of the feast and the bridegroom. We're never directly told that the miracle takes place.

Jesus says, fill up the pots. They do so. He says, draw out and take to the master of the feast.

They do so. And we find out sort of indirectly from the master that it has become wine. And he doesn't know where it has come from.

And the people at the feast largely don't know. They are unaware that this provision has been made. And it is a reminder that those who are at the Old Testament table, if they weren't looking, if they weren't watching, if they weren't privy to what's going on in the back room, like the disciples and these servants are, who also act at Jesus' word, they probably never knew, or at least didn't find out until later.

And they might have scoffed if somebody said, hey, did you know that that was really water pot water? And they, yeah, sure it was. They just had a hidden store somewhere. Who sees this and believes? It tells us in verse 11, this beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory.

Jesus found a way to meet the need without preempting His hour. His hour had not yet come. So He did not do this publicly and openly.

He didn't tell the servants, take those water pots to the center of the feast room and abracadabra and a puff of smoke and a bolt of lightning and suddenly water turns to wine and it comes gushing forth and everybody is wowed and impressed. Jesus did it in a way where they did not see it. And there are reasons for that that we'll see when we cover our second miracle after the break.

The second miracle is directly, intimately connected with this one. So if you think we haven't fully covered all the details in covering the second miracle, we will wrap this one

up. So let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we will see why this first sign is so significant, not only in the account, but also for you and me. What are we to draw from this? What are we to make of it? If we drink some of this new wine, what conclusion do we draw? Well, we'll see that when we return.