

Miracles of Jesus 12-06-03b

We pick up our study of the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ at this point this morning with miracle number 12. Wonderful number. I'm glad this one came up at this particular juncture.

I didn't order them on purpose this way, but 12 is a very good number if you're looking at Israel. This is going to be found in Matthew chapter 12, verses 22 through 32. It is also recorded in Luke 11, 14 through 26.

We'll look at the account in Matthew. It gives us a little bit of context. Matthew chapter 12, beginning at verse 22.

If you look at chapter 12, you will see that there is a lot to do with the Sabbath. It begins with the disciples pulling grain off the heads. Oh, you're harvesting on the Sabbath.

You're doing work. Jesus makes a teaching point out of that. Then the miracle that we saw very recently with the number nine, the man with the withered hand, is there in 12, 9 through 13.

Stretch out your hand. He stretched it out and it was restored as whole as the others. Then, verse 14, the Pharisees went out and plotted against him how they might destroy him.

You can't have people getting healed. You can't have Jesus being a threat to their construction of what the Sabbath is and their domain of religious authority. So he withdrew from there.

Great multitudes followed him and he healed them all. These are the unrecorded miracles, probably many of them spectacular, but nobody could record them all. So it just says he healed all of these that came.

But these multitudes that followed, this is a multitude such as we saw following him outside of Nain, his reputation spread throughout the land. Look at verse 16, yet he warned them not to make him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet. Now why would Jesus do this and say, don't make me known? Tell no man.

Go show yourself to the priest and so on. Why would Jesus say this? This seems counter to all of the modern notions of promotion, doesn't it? It seems like Jesus would say, go tell everyone the Messiah is here and they need to get with the program. He says, don't tell anyone.

Well, it's explained. Isaiah the prophet said, Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him and he will

declare justice to the nations, to the Gentiles.

He will not quarrel nor cry out nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break and a smoking flax he will not quench until he sends forth justice to victory, unto, with a view toward victory. And in his name Gentiles will trust.

So how does this answer the question? Well if you remember our study of Isaiah and if you give this a little bit of thought, why would Jesus not want his miraculous healings to be broadcast? They were anyway. But the issue becomes clouded, does it not? Remember when he feeds the 5,000 and then when he's trying to go across the lake and the disciples are rowing across and the people come and try to make him king? Give us this bread always. Remember that? Misconstruing his purpose.

Is he just here to be a big one-man hospital, one-man EMT crew? He's going to go around and anytime somebody gets blind or sick or afflicted or leprous or demon possessed, he's just the fix-it man? Temporal bandages, big aspirin, big Excedrin pill or an Aleve or a Tylenol or Ibuprofen or a Hydrocodone or something stronger? Is he just there to alleviate immediate sufferings? No, it is a sign as the Shunammite woman figured out, this is a messenger from God. The words in his mouth are truth. As Jesus says, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.

He doesn't say appeal to him to get all your problems solved. Hear him. There's something bigger going on.

This is in danger of being lost and Jesus says, don't just tout me as a big miracle worker. There's something bigger. These are symptoms.

Disease is a symptom of the presence of sin, of the fallenness of the human race, of the incursion of evil in the form of the principalities and powers as well as the fallenness of creation. What is the fundamental problem? It's not disease. It's not demons.

The fundamental problem is sin and evil. Jesus has come to address the problem at its source. The wages of sin is death.

Well, you address sin, death is no longer a problem, right? We're not just addressing death, we want to address sin from which results death. Let's get to the source. You wind up with a malady.

You don't want to just cover over the symptoms. You want to cure the disease and the disease is sin. The disease is rebellion and rejection of God and the cure is to come to God.

The one who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that what? Diligently seek him. Not diligently seek his rewards. He that cometh to God will receive all kinds of rewards.

No, he that comes to God must believe in God and believe that his benefits come to those who are seeking him, not the benefits. So there's a danger of displacement here. We're going to look at the benefits instead of the source, the cause, the Son of God, the truth of God incarnate, the Word of God made flesh.

Well, this is the context now beginning in verse 22, then one was brought to him who was demon possessed, blind and mute. And he healed him so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. All the multitudes were amazed and said, Could this be the Son of David? Ah, interesting.

What was the reaction in Nain? A great prophet has arisen among us. Could this be the Son of David? When the Pharisees heard it they said, This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Pharisees just hate Jesus.

You would think how can you not appreciate a deliverance of this magnitude? Well, they don't appreciate it at all. And they've got to try to turn it into a negative. How can we spin this so that it damages him instead of exalting him? Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation.

Every city or house divided against itself will not stand. And there's a great application right there. How important is it in our community of believers, in our family of believers, and in our personal families to not let division and strife arise? Because that family and that house cannot stand.

A church divided against itself cannot stand. A husband and wife divided cannot stand. Where is the unity? Well, it begins with the unity of the church.

It begins with humility. What do the Pharisees lack? Humility. What do Satan and the fallen angels lack? Humility, teachability, recognition of wrong, admission of fault.

This is the key to forgiveness in God's plan and purpose, is it not? Psalm 51, 1 John 1.9, I acknowledge that I screwed up. It was me, myself and I, accountable, responsible for this, O Lord. I throw myself on your mercy, the blood of Jesus Christ, to cleanse.

I want to walk in the light as He is in the light and be restored and enjoy fellowship and receive that cleansing grace because I screw up. It's me. I don't blame anybody else.

I don't blame circumstance. It doesn't matter how it came about. I failed.

It's me. I don't even blame my quote-unquote old sin nature. The old sin nature is not a little ugly black box and if I could just detach that thing, I'd be a wonderful guy.

It's me. I am shot through with it. Me, myself and I is inherently sinful.

I was conceived in iniquity. I was born in sin and I am composed of it. It is a part of me.

It's the old man and that old man has to be regenerated and renewed in righteousness through faith. And it's not a little box. It's me.

The box is me. Jesus said every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. You want to desolate your family? You want to desolate your church? You want to desolate your friendships and your fellowships? Just harbor a grudge.

Just be unforgiving. Just be arrogant and self-centered. You can spread desolation like a plague.

If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. And guess what? Satan is not divided against himself. We've got sort of a funny record where Satan is trying to preside over the chaotic minions of darkness and they're sassing him and so on.

The whole point here is that Jesus makes Satan is not divided. Satan is very strategically positioned and he and his spirits, the fallen angels, are united in rebellion against God. You know what holds them together? Hatred for God.

You know what holds the Pharisees together and unites them? At different times in Israel's history, the Pharisees and the chief priests and the scribes would be factionalized. They would be warring against each other. But the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

And they were united in hatred for the Lord Jesus. And the chief priests and scribes, the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees, all of these were united in their opposition to Jesus. And Satan is united in his opposition to God and his plan and his purpose.

And the fallen angels, the third of the stars that are swept by the dragon's tail, it's not chaotic. It is orchestrated. It is disciplined.

It is effective. It is intelligent. Way smarter than us.

We are not smart enough to outsmart the opposition against us. We have to rely on God. The Lord Jesus is our wisdom.

The Word of God is our strength. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. Well, Satan does not cast out Satan and he's not divided against himself.

That's the implication. We have a formidable foe. If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, Jesus says, talking to the Pharisees, by whom do your sons cast them out? And this is a big, which we'll return to momentarily.

Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, if and it's true, surely the kingdom of God has overtaken you, come upon you. We've seen this verb overtaken before.

Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? Then he will plunder his house. He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me scatters abroad. Well, first of all, there's an interesting composition of these first 12 signs.

And no matter how you number them, at this point, if you're going somewhat anywhere near chronologically, following the Gospels, when you get to this point you've covered these 12. You can say the order within that 12 might be shuffled, but these 12 pretty much all hang together as a unit in all of the Gospels. John, of course, has his own set of seven signs.

But in the Synoptic Gospels, at this point in Jesus' ministry, these seven sign miracles have taken place. These 12, I should say. Seven of them stress and emphasize and point out and illustrate Jesus' authority.

You remember that? Wine to water, ritual to reality, Jesus has authority to talk about the law and show its fulfillment. The nobleman's son, when he heals at a distance, also at Cana, the demoniac in the synagogue, the guy says, I know who you are, the Holy One of God, if you come to destroy us before the time of Jesus, exercises authority and says, come out of him. And he makes him scream and he comes out.

Be quiet and come out of him. Number four, Peter's mother-in-law, you have blessing by association, but you have Jesus' authority over that disease. Number five, the miraculous draft of fish, and these are not necessarily in the order I covered in this time, but that draft of fish, you have spiritual reality, Peter acknowledging, I am a sinful man, depart from me.

But you see Jesus' authority over nature. You have the cleansing of the leper. Jesus says, tell no man, go show yourself to the priest, and he defies Jesus' authority, he doesn't obey him.

So is it your talking testimony or is it your testimony of obedience in your life? And if we respond to the authority of Jesus there, we will do the obedience route. You have the paralytic coming down through the roof. Jesus has authority on earth to forgive sins.

The cripple at Bethesda, you have that appeal to legalism and to priestly authority and to those at the synagogue versus Jesus. And the guy just can't seem to shake that legalistic view. The withered hand, stretch out your hand, and it's made whole.

And this, of course, was another Sabbath day miracle. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. The centurion's servant, of course, that's a real plain exercise of authority and the centurion spells that out.

But in the first seven, you have an emphasis on the authority of Jesus in all these different realms, realms of nature, realms of morality and sin, realms of the law versus

grace, disease, demons. And then the next five are really kind of focused on the response to these things. You see the manifestation of Jesus' authority and what is the response? So what is the response of the man at Bethesda? Well, he runs back to the people at the synagogue.

What is the response to the man with the withered hand? They plot to destroy him. What is the response with the centurion's servant? What is the response with the widow's son? A great one has arisen. What are we to think about this? And now, number 12 here, the blind and mute, demon-possessed man or the blind and dumb spirit, we're going to see the reaction.

They say, he's doing this in the power of God. The power of Satan, the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. That's their response.

Well, let's look at the details of this. These miracles are a testimony to the identity of Jesus. No prophet would have authority in all of these different realms.

No prophet could invoke his own authority. I say to you, arise and death is overcome. So there is a message being sent through these signs.

And by simply talking about the miracles over and over again, Jesus says, don't concentrate on that. Don't spread that abroad. Don't make him known.

Why? There is a progress of revelation. The good thing is, God has begun to act on behalf of Israel. The fulfillment of God's promises are imminent.

What is the nature of those promises and how are they going to be fulfilled? Focus on God. Focus on the promise. Focus on fulfillment.

Focus on the fullness of times. Not just, hey, isn't it great we've got a million people, but we've got to get to the end of it. So, often you see a picture of larger things.

This man is possessed of a blind and mute spirit. Blind and mute. Interesting.

Was he deaf? Apparently not. A lot of times deafness and muteness go together because if you can't hear, you can't learn how to talk. But this This is a strange thing, because apparently the man can hear, but he can't speak.

He's tongue-tied in some way. And he is blind. The reason is demon possession.

And the demon is attributed with the power to blind the man and to prevent him from talking. Now how would they know that this blindness and muteness was demon-induced? It's an interesting question. Apparently he threw some sort of fits.

They typically, you know, if you had sort of epileptic behavior, they would attribute this to a demon, and in those days it was often the case. But if he's mute, he couldn't speak

in an exorcist voice and scare people with the presence of a clearly altered identity in there. If he's not speaking and he's blind, how do they figure out he was demon-possessed? It's an interesting question.

It just states it outright. One was brought to him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute. This guy has got horrible problems.

But when you look at the symbolism of the afflicted, whether it's the widow representing Israel here, because the man has got the presence of a demon instead of the presence of God, there's two things he can't do. He can't see and he can't speak. And this is an aspect of what has happened to the nation of Israel.

Israel, hearing they hear and do not understand, seeing they see and do not perceive. He can't see. Israel cannot see the purpose and the plan of God, their role in history, the coming of the Messiah.

They're blind to it. Now you would think, well, blind to death, that would be a good picture of it. But instead this is a mute spirit.

What is the role of Israel from the inception of the nation? When God made the promise to Abraham, what did he say? Your descendants will be as numerous as the sand of the beach, the stars of the heaven. And you will be what? A light to the nations, a light to the Gentiles, a testimony. And you see this happening periodically.

Rahab knows exactly who the Israelites are, knows who the God of Israel is. The servant girl that goes to the household of Naaman the Syrian says, there is a God in Israel who can heal and his prophet is who you need to see. And Naaman comes to believe in God through his healing.

And there is a testimony, there is a light to the Gentiles. Well, if they can't see, they cannot speak. They can't communicate that testimony.

This is an aspect. There are so many different facets when we are out of function and out of the plan and purpose of God. And this has the idea here, unable to speak has the idea of you cannot be an effective witness.

If you can't see, if you are beset with the power of darkness yourself, if you haven't mastered it, if you are not out from under its control, you cannot be a witness. You cannot reflect the glory of God. That's the symbolic value of this particular man.

And notice he is brought to him. And Jesus healed him so that the blind and mute both spoke and saw. A little mini chiasm there.

You notice it says blind and mute both spoke and saw. The blindness and the healing of the blindness are on the outside. The muteness is in the middle.

What's normally the more important thing? In a bracket. It's the stuff in the middle. The emphasis here is his muteness.

It's a small emphasis but it's there. The blind and mute both spoke and saw. All the multitudes were amazed and said, could this be the son of David? Well why would they say that? Why don't they say a great prophet has arisen among us? Well, we'll save the answer to that question for just a moment by continuing on forward.

When the Pharisees heard it, they said, this fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Now you begin to get the answer to your question. They recognize that there is an authority issue here.

Is he invoking the authority of King David? Is this the kingdom which is marked by the throne of David? They know they're Old Testament scriptures. The kingdom that is coming, God's kingdom that is coming, is presided over by the throne of David. They know this.

That kingdom is not just any old kingdom. It is marked and stamped with the name of David and the throne of David. They say, could this be the son of David, the one who is going to bring in the kingdom? This is great because Jesus has been preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

The kingdom of God is at hand. He's going to say it on down here. If I cast out demons by the spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

In other words, the people are drawing a valid conclusion. Son of David is kingdom of God. The crowd is getting the message.

The Pharisees want to upset this understanding and this interpretation, so they say, no, no, no. This is not God's power, God's kingdom, God's king, God's throne. This is the demonic throne, the demonic king, the demonic prince.

It's his authority that is being invoked. Vicious, vicious attack. I just want to point one thing out here.

When you run into people who oppose you, especially when there is an element of resistance to your identity as a Christian, they dislike you because you're a believer, whether formally or informally, just because of your values, your lifestyle. You don't do the things that they do, and just your existence stands as sort of a rebuke to them. You don't engage in the behaviors.

You don't act with other people the way they do. You don't engage in various kinds of activities, and they hate you for that, because why aren't you like us? I feel bad enough about myself without seeing you, and I've told myself that, well, I couldn't help it, but here's somebody who does help it. Well, it's like an unspoken rebuke, and they'll hate

you for it.

And what they will do, always, sooner or later, what they are guilty of is imputed to you. Always. It's so ironic.

You will be castigated. You will be accused. You will be charged.

You will be tried, judge and jury, and sentence passed, that you are guilty of these things, and it is what they are guilty of. They want to infuse you with the same guilt that they know in their hearts they are guilty of. It always happens.

And just recognize it for what it is. You can smile and say, look, there it is. Who do you think is motivating these Pharisees? Who do you think is the prince of their hearts? Who do you think is behind their orchestrated attempts to destroy the Lord Jesus? It's Satan.

So what do they do? They accuse him of operating in the power of Satan. It's a huge irony. They judge others by themselves.

Jesus knew their thoughts. He knows their hearts. He knows that Satan is actually behind this, and Satan is trying to cast aspersions through this.

And so Jesus says, every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation. Every city or house divided against itself will not stand. And this is true on the positive side and on the negative side.

Skip down to 27. If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Here's the fact. No demons have been cast out in Israel except by Jesus.

So if they are making a claim to superiority, we have the way, the truth, and the life. We are the children of God and the representatives of the law and righteousness on this earth. And we're doing things right.

You're breaking the Sabbath. You're in league with Satan. You're trying to lead the people astray.

You're doing this in the power of Satan. Jesus says, well, look, I'm casting out demons. And if I'm doing it by the power of Satan, and your implication is that, well, obviously the power of God is stronger than the power of Satan, well, then your sons are casting out demons by the power of God, right? Except there is nobody casting out demons.

And so, tacitly, if they say, well, you're casting out demons by the power of Satan, and he says, well, who are your sons casting them out by? What are you saying? Satan's stronger than God? Satan can cast out demons? God can't? This is what's really going on here. He's not saying, oh, well, you all have got, I mean, it just becomes a confusing argument if you assume that, well, there are other guys going around and casting out demons. Nobody can solve this demon problem.

There never was a demon problem before or since, as there was in the days of Jesus Christ. Because Satan knew. He'd read Daniel.

He didn't know exactly when, but he figured Jesus is coming at some point, and he scattered his minions into flesh to try to oppose Him. He said, if God's going to come into flesh, I'm going to get my guys there in the flesh. We're going to wrestle against flesh and blood here.

God says, well, Satan, as smart as you think you are, the battle is not in flesh and blood. We've got a spiritual war going on here, and you're not going to win it getting into the flesh of people. But Jesus had the power to remove these guys from the flesh.

Well, nobody in Israel could do it. Nobody had ever done it. Why do you not think if anybody had ever done it, they'd be trooping to the guy? Behold, there was a great crowd in Jerusalem looking for the priest that cast out demons.

Nobody could do it. No Pharisee cast out any demons. And so here's Jesus doing something they can't do.

And so they say, well, He's doing it by the power of Satan. Jesus says, well, fine. Whose power do you use to cast out demons? Well, it's just, you know, the egg is just dripping off their face.

Therefore they shall be your judges. They who? Is it the demons or is it the sons? Well, the reference here is not clear. Could be either one or both.

Jesus lets the Pharisees figure that out. By whom do your sons cast out? Therefore they shall be your judges. And it is the followers and the disciples of the Pharisees who will be the judges.

In other words, your guys are powerless. Remember, the disciples of the Lord Jesus are going to do greater works than He has done because it is by the Spirit of God, by the power of God that these things are done. If I cast out demons, notice, by my own deity, by my identity as the Son of God, how does He do it? The Lord Jesus lived His life in the flesh the way we are to live this life in the flesh, in the power of the Spirit.

Jesus did not invoke His deity. He invoked the Spirit of God, and it is the same power available to you and me. If we've got influences of evil in our life, if we've got sin busting things up, causing division, the Spirit of God gives us the power to cast it out, get rid of it.

If there is evil in our lives that is rendering us blind so that we cannot see and mute so that we cannot testify and witness to God, the Spirit of God has the power to solve that problem. It's the same Spirit that cast this demon out. The very same Spirit of God dwells in you, dwells in me, and has exactly the same power to cast out evil.

It's a matter of recognizing and implementing this privilege that we have from God. If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the Kingdom of God has overtaken you, has come upon you. Then you've got this thing with the strong man, and he uses an argument from logic.

If that which is under the control of a strong man is plundered and taken away, i.e., the demons, it implies that you've got power to bind the strong man. You are stronger than the strong man. Jesus is stronger than Satan.

That's the implication. Bind the strong man, plunder his house. That's what Jesus is doing.

You have a lot of this praying to bind Satan and so on today. Jesus has power over the strong man. We can do the plundering, but we are not binders.

Jesus Himself has power to bind the strong man. Do not pray to God to bind Satan. Satan is not going to be bound again until Jesus binds him again at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

He's going to bind him and cast him into the bottomless pit for a thousand years. God binds Satan. We don't ask God to bind him.

He's not going to be bound. He's going to roam the earth, seeking whom He may devour. Jesus didn't say, Peter, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you like wheat.

He's roaming, seeking whom He may devour, but I have bound him so that he won't harm you. There are specific times and ways that God will limit Satan's options, as He did in the book of Job. And we're back to forgiveness.

If you read the rest of this chapter, we don't have time to go into it, but Jesus says, Therefore every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. In the realm of believers and unbelievers, this is refusing the testimony. We're back to the mute man.

God the Holy Spirit testifies to who Jesus is. And if you blaspheme, if you call the Holy Spirit a liar, that is unforgivable. That's what sends you to eternal judgment.

Any other word spoken will be forgiven, but rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit as to who Jesus is, can't be forgiven. You've rejected God's salvation, won't be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come. There's no coming back from that rejection.

Well, once again, you have the issue of authority and response to authority in this first dozen miracles. The first third of the ones that are recorded in Scripture. We have that same issue.

God has a call on your life. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. Therefore

glorify God in your body, in your life.

What is our response to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ? What is our response to the presence of God's Holy Spirit? What is our response? Are we going to allow ourselves to be silenced and blinded by evil? Are we going to recognize and submit to the mighty hand of God so that He can exalt us in due time? It's our choice. Well, we'll close here in a word of prayer and pick up with our study of the miracles next week. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for the clear and graphic ways that You have illustrated for us the responsibility and the opportunity that we have because of what the Lord Jesus has done for us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher and impress these things on our hearts in a meaningful and pertinent way so that day by day we will see, recognize, and exploit our opportunities to recognize and respond to these things that are an expression of Your authority, the authority of the Lord Jesus, and our faith and obedience in that light. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.