

Miracles 24-08-18a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning service here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It's great to have everyone with us as we embark on a new study.

We're going to cover the detailed miracles of the Lord Jesus. This is a study we've done once or twice in the past, and one might wonder why we're undertaking it again. And we'll have that as a part of our introduction this morning.

But let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and take this moment to focus our attention and offload any of the distractions and concerns of the day. And we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful for another opportunity to spend this time together, to be encouraged, lifted up and built up through the gifts that you've given to each one of us.

We're so appreciative of the presence and the power of your Holy Spirit, that where two or three are gathered in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus, He is with us in the midst. And with your superintending grace, the presence and power of your Spirit, and the example of the Lord Jesus, which we have before us this morning, we are fully provisioned. We are enabled and prepared to live the life that you call us to by your power and in your strength.

We pray that as we look together at this portion of your Word, that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, help us to understand it and see its pertinence and application in our own lives. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

So the opportunity to spend time in the Word of God, looking specifically at the Lord Jesus Christ is at the top of the list. It just doesn't get any better than spending time in the Gospels, looking at the words and the works of the Lord Jesus, His manifestation and appearing in His first advent. By way of quick review, mainly because it is widely misunderstood today, the Lord Jesus has two comings.

There is the first advent and the second advent, as they call it. And advent just means He shows up. His first coming is in humility.

It is His revelation in human flesh. He is born of a virgin. He grows up with a standard issue human childhood and adolescence and early adulthood moving into His adult years.

And He begins His public ministry around 30 years of age. We see Him in the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke. We see Him appear at the temple briefly at the age of 12.

And then all four Gospels detail His formal ministry some three decades after His birth. He was born somewhere in the vicinity of 6 BC. And if He begins His ministry at the age of 30, as Scripture tells us, that puts us in the realm of 25 in the Anno Domini terms, the

proper way is to say AD 25.

So the distinction between the first and second coming is one that is foreshadowed and anticipated in the Old Testament. He is pictured in some prophetic passages as the suffering servant. You think of Isaiah, particularly in this regard, where He comes and is despised and rejected.

He has no form or comeliness that we should desire Him. He is wounded for our transgressions. He's bruised for our iniquities.

The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all by His stripes we are healed and so on. This is His appearance as the suffering servant. In that role, we have a wonderful revelation of many aspects of God Himself, His mercy, His compassion, His patience, His long-suffering.

And yet this is not the complete picture. And in Christianity today, there are many who only want to understand the Lord Jesus in terms of what is found in the Gospels. They want to develop an ethic that is based almost entirely and exclusively on the Sermon on the Mount.

Love your enemies, turn the other cheek, judge no one, accept everyone, friend of sinners, and so on. This is a misunderstanding at best that, among other things, doesn't acknowledge or recognize that there is a second coming, which is the coming in glory and in power, where there will be exclusion, and there will be judgment, and there will be recompense to those who embrace iniquity and don't respond in repentance to the Lord Jesus. So as we look at these miraculous events in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, we want to remember that these are designed for a purpose.

As with all of the miracles that you find in the Bible, Old Testament and New, they are purposeful. It isn't just something needs doing, I'm going to use divine power to do it. They are authentication of a messenger as being from God, therefore representing God's plan and purpose for the targeted individuals.

So when Moses comes before Pharaoh and you have the nine miraculous plagues followed by the night of the death of the firstborn, who are not in a household with blood on the doorposts and on the lentil, this marks a change. It is a new phase of God's plan and purpose. The people of God, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are now going to become a nation under God, the nation of Israel.

And there are so many wonderful pictures in the exodus of liberation from slavery to sin, and the necessity for faith for the journey to the promised land, what happens when there is forgetfulness, when there is apathy and indifference, when people long for the leeks and garlics of Egypt and so on. But that change is marked with those miraculous events. Once Israel comes into the land, there is miraculous deliverance, miraculous

conquest under Joshua with fire and hail and brimstone coming down from heaven, walls falling down after Israel does nothing but march, carrying the Ark of the Covenant and so on.

This marks the end of the wilderness phase and beginning of the occupation phase of the promised land. Later on, to authenticate the message that is brought by God's prophets, there are miraculous events, miraculous judgments, kings stretching forth their hands and finding their arm withers, Elijah and Elisha, their ministries marked by miraculous happenings that tell the people of God, this man has a message from God. And this notion of authentication then extends forward to the appearance of the Lord Jesus.

Interestingly, the harbinger of the Lord Jesus, the voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight. John the Baptist does not perform a single miracle. There's no record of John doing anything supernatural.

He observes the spirit descending like a dove and that is a sign to him from God that Yeshua, Jesus is in fact the coming one. So these miracles that we're going to look at together accomplish the same purpose. They are identification that Jesus is in fact sent from God.

The blind man in John nine, we will see in an upcoming study recognizes this. Nicodemus is going to recognize it in John chapter three, that no one can do these things unless he is from God. Whoever heard of one other than God healing a man born blind, who can cast out demons and so on.

So these miracles have a purpose and they authenticate the message. And because of that, they are integral. Their details reflect important elements of the message.

It's not simply a powerful demonstration designed to get attention. Every detail of these miracles matters. There are 35 or 36, depending on how I decide to number them, formally detailed miracles of Jesus Christ recorded in the scriptures.

There are other miracles that take place in the presence of Peter and John and the apostle Paul and so on. But in the recorded career of the Lord Jesus in the four gospels, there are 35 formally detailed miracles. There are many others that are not detailed.

And the number of times that this is emphasized is important. So if you're taking notes, one of the things you may want to note is these general occasions of miraculous healings are plentiful. Typically a phrase like he healed all who came to him, or he went about healing their sicknesses and diseases.

You find this in Matthew chapter four, verses 23 through 25. You find it in Matthew chapter eight, verses 14 through 17. And the Isaiah passage I quoted earlier about him carrying our sorrows and burying our sicknesses from Isaiah 53, verse four is quoted in

that second context of Matthew 8, 14 through 17.

It is mentioned again in Matthew 12, 15. Again in Matthew 14, 14. Again in that same chapter, Matthew 14, 34.

Matthew 15, 29 through 31. Matthew 21, 14. So that's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven times a day of healing or an occasion of healing for the people of Israel is mentioned just in the gospel of Matthew.

You find it again in other passages. And these are representative. Mark 6, 56.

Luke 4, 38 through 41. Luke 5, 17. Luke 6, 18 through 19.

And 9, 11. The point being that these are representative miracles. They are a sample given in detail of hundreds, many hundreds of healings that the Lord Jesus performed in and among the people of Israel during the three and a half years of his ministry.

Interestingly, by my count of 35 or 36 miracles, there are also 35 or 36 parables. And that is also a fascinating study that we may undertake again when we finish this one. The reason we are reviewing these miracles now is the first time we studied the miracles as miracles going down the list was back in 1995 when Grace and Truth first started.

Our church began in January of 1995, and this was one of the first studies that we did along with the gospel of Mark and Galatians. There are a number of people I can count on the fingers of one hand who were here 30 years ago when the church started. And so most have not been party to that study.

In the gospel of Mark, we had covered about 17 of the 35 miracles, and I did not repeat them in that 1995 miracle study because we had just covered them in Mark. So that study was kind of incomplete and divided. Later on, in 1999 to 2000, we did the gospel of Luke, and Luke records 20 of the 35 miracles, and so we covered them there.

But again, that has been 25 years ago. Ten years after that, in 2012, we did a full study, a formal series, as we are doing now, of the miracles. Once again, that's 12 years ago, and we took a broad approach.

There was a lot of additional material for context and supplementation in that. It wasn't really a focused study of each of the miracles. And in the intervening time, there have been many changes, both in our individual lives, in our church, and in our circumstances in the world at large, and our perspective on the work and ministry and words of the Lord Jesus due to our recent gospel of Matthew study, which took us four years from 2019 to 2023.

Matthew, like Luke, only covers 20 of the 35 miracles. So for a variety of reasons, I want to go back and review and advance our understanding of these miracles. It allows us to

focus directly on the Lord Jesus Christ, who appears, who is manifested.

We've seen the word epiphany in terms of appearing on the scene in a dramatic way. He did so in a milieu of economic, social, and political upheaval to people who were dominated by a hostile government, who had many needs, both physical and spiritual. And the similarities to the time in which we now live are many.

And looking at the works as well as the words of the Lord Jesus on these occasions is very fraught and heavy-laden with value in terms of application for us. In Matthew 13, 52, the Lord Jesus said, every scribe who is instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old. So we're going to review in each of these miracle studies, things that we have observed in the past.

We'll pull them together and condense them as well as seeing things that we haven't seen before, because we have a perspective now that we didn't have back then. So even if you have recently excavated the old studies of the miracles, I think you will find that we'll be covering and plowing quite a bit of new ground as well. That having been said, please turn with me to our passage for the morning, which is John 2, 1-12.

This is an account of the first sign of seven that John records in his gospel. You may remember that John organizes his gospel around these seven sign miracles of which this is the first. And if you find John chapter two, 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? My hour has not yet come.

His mother said to the servants, whatever he says to you do. Now there were set there six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews containing 20 or 30 gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, fill the water pots with water.

And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast. And 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 him, every man at the beginning sets out the good wine. And 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. After this, he went down to Capernaum. He, his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they did not stay there many days.

Well, you begin at the beginning on the third day. You'll recall, and we, if you want a more detailed coverage of some of these review points, you can go back to the 2012 study, which has recently been listed in more detail. It's more accessible.

You can find what you're looking for there. But we have covered in the past why this is the third day. It is because of the third day and the seventh day.

Because in the gospel of John, the first day is in John 1 26, where John the Baptist identifies Jesus in the crowd. As there is one standing in your midst, whom you do not know, you do not recognize. Jesus is in the crowd at the Jordan watching John baptize.

John spots him and announces his presence. This happens in Bethany. Your Bible may say Beth Abara, but this is because they knew Bethany is near Jerusalem, just on the other side of the Mount of Olives.

And they said, well, that can't be right. And later people changed it. There was another Bethany, which is translated the house of dates.

You have Bethphage, which is the house of figs. You have Bethlehem, which is the house of bread. But obviously any place that had a lot of dates might call their town house of dates.

And this is one that was located down by the Jordan. So it is Bethany, not the one East of Jerusalem, but a small town near the Jordan. That was day one.

In John 1 29, it's day two. The next day, this is when John says, behold, the lamb of God. John knows that Jesus is going to be God's sacrifice for sins.

God's Passover lamb. That's day two. Day one, John 1 26, day two, John 1 29, day three, Andrew and John are introduced to the Lord Jesus and follow him.

They believe the word of John's testimony. Notice that at this point, John the Baptist has done no miracle. The Lord Jesus has done no miracle.

No one has seen signs or miracles. And yet John and Andrew believe. Andrew goes and finds his brother Simon.

John goes and finds Philip and Bartholomew. And so you have the first five disciples already down at the Jordan. Where are these men from? Do you remember? Where are Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, and Bartholomew? Where are they from? Are they from Judea? Are they from Jerusalem? They're all from north of the sea of Galilee.

They are from Capernaum. And we'll find that Bartholomew, also known as Nathanael, he's actually from Cana. That's his hometown.

So these five, James at this point is not mentioned. You get the idea that John has come

down and James is still helping Zebedee with the fishing business. So that is the fourth day when Nathanael and Philip follow.

It is now time for Jesus to go up to the wedding feast where he and his disciples have been invited. And it is a two-day journey. And so on the third day, they arrive and are at the wedding.

So there has been a total of a week detailed, but day five and six are invisible. It's a time of travel. Jesus is at the Jordan being baptized.

Now he is in Cana at a wedding celebration. You may remember that Jesus is going to ask James and John, when they say, we would like to sit at their mother's behest, we would like to sit at your right hand and at your left in the kingdom. And Jesus says, are you able to drink the cup that I drink? And can you be baptized with my baptism? And they famously say, and there's a hymn with this title, Lord, we are able.

I can still hear Ernie Ford singing that out of my mom's stereo when I was a kid. Lord, we are able. Our spirits are strong.

Remold and make us like the divine. It's a great old song. But the baptism is followed by, and the place and the time of baptizing are followed by this appearance at a wedding feast.

And you begin to see anticipations of bigger things. Jesus' baptism in terms of his first advent, his coming in humility as the suffering servant and being baptized and drinking his cup there is followed after two days of non-visibility and then being visible again at the third day at a wedding banquet where cups of new wine are going to be drunk because Jesus is going to perform this miracle. So you can already see that there are resonances and overtones and spiritual values implicit in the details of this miracle that begin with chapter one.

And believe me, that's just a taste. So what happens here on the third day? There's a wedding in Cana of Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there.

Both Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. When they run out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine. They do not have wine.

Jesus says to her, woman, what does your concern have to do with me? We've seen before that a man calling his mother woman might be sort of awkward and off-putting in English, but it was a commonplace. Can you think of another time where Jesus uses this form of address? From the cross, two of the same people that are at this occasion stand at the foot of the cross and Jesus says what? Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother.

Remember that? John is at the foot of the cross, as is Mary, and he addresses her in the

same way. So here in one of the first adult occasions, we see Jesus speaking with his mother. He calls her and in one of the last, you have the same form of address.

So Jesus tells Mary that his hour has not yet come. What is this hour? He has been baptized. The Holy Spirit has descended.

This hour is the time for his public manifestation, his formal introduction to the people of Israel with signs of authentication, marking him out as sent from God with a mission from God and the words of God to communicate. That hour is not yet. Jesus has done no public preaching.

He doesn't rise up from the water and give a sermon after John baptizes him. But Mary is not deterred. She is not discouraged when Jesus says, what does this concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.

Mary doesn't argue with the Lord Jesus. She doesn't offer any kind of practical or theological counterpoint. What does she do? She just turns to the servants and says, do whatever he tells you.

Do whatever he says. Does that sound familiar at all? What is Jesus going to tell his own disciples later on in this same gospel? The one who has my words and keeps them. The great commission, quote, unquote, in Matthew 28, make disciples, teaching them to observe whatsoever things I have commanded you.

Do my words. We've reviewed all of the commands of the Lord Jesus in our recent first Timothy study. So Mary has an active faith.

She acknowledges that if Jesus says his hour has not yet come, then it's not time for him to do public miracles and draw attention to himself and begin preaching. There's no sermon given. Jesus doesn't offer the toast and convert it into a sermon.

So his hour has not yet come. But Mary says, well, you're my son and I think you're going to handle this. So servants, you, they apparently would do whatever Mary says, because Mary tells them do whatever he says.

So the servants recognize Mary as an authority. I will tell you my speculation here. It is only a speculation.

I draw no conclusions or applications from it. But if I had to guess, I think this wedding might be one of Jesus' brothers, because Jesus is invited and comes. Jesus' mother is there and she seems to be in charge and weddings, this feast and reception were put on by the bridegroom's family.

So it is someone in Mary's family married here. And it would make sense because Jesus is about 30 and you know that he's got several brothers and some sisters at this point.

And so as is often the case in families, the firstborn and the eldest may not be the first to get married.

Jesus, of course, is unmarried, but one of his brothers could easily be in his twenties at this point. And this is a family gathering and Jesus attends. He makes a two-day trip from the Jordan and takes his disciples and goes there.

Not only is he there, but his brothers are there. If you look down at verse 12, after this, he went down to Capernaum, he, his mother, his brothers, and his disciples. So they travel from Cana to Capernaum.

It's not very far. It's a single-digit number of miles. It's north and a bit west.

But Jesus' mother and brothers are at this wedding. Jesus himself attends it. So it is in any case, someone who is a close relative.

I personally will be unsurprised to find out that it was actually one of Jesus' brothers, which figures at the point that the master of the feast receives the wine in verse nine, and he didn't know where it came from. So the master of the feast called the bridegroom. This entire story, if you look at it, is not so much narrative as the record of three conversations.

The first is with Jesus and Mary. The second is Jesus and the servants. And the third is the master of the feast with the bridegroom.

And the entire story, the miracle itself slips in unobserved and undescribed via these conversations. Think about the narratives, the teaching passages, the poetry, the history, the exposition of the Word of God itself. We have not seen the miracles.

We know of them because of the words, the conversations, the points that are made in Word of God. And we come to know the miraculous. We come to know the power of God, the compassion of God, the grace of God, the effectual working of God through the conversations that are recorded for us, the words of the authors of Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In the same way that John and Andrew and Peter and Philip and Nathaniel slash Bartholomew come to believe in the Lord Jesus simply through the words of John the Baptist and their sharing with one another. Andrew goes and finds Simon, who will become Peter, and they go together to find Philip and Nathaniel. And there's nothing but conversation.

But all five of those men become followers of the Lord Jesus on that fourth day and follow him from the Jordan. They don't stick around and listen to see what else John the Baptist has to say. They have found the subject and the purpose and the reason for John's ministry.

John hands them off as men of faith to follow the Lord Jesus directly. There are others who never do leave John, and you find them years later in the time of the Apostle Paul. And there are disciples of John the Baptist who only know about John's water baptism and haven't made the spiritual connection to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And when they hear the message from Paul, they receive the Spirit. So there's a lot going on here. But when you see the role that Mary plays here, you get the idea that the Lord Jesus has come not because he sees it as an occasion to perform a sign miracle and launch his public ministry.

These are personal reasons. And when she wants him to do a miracle, and we're not even sure she wanted him to do a miracle, she just says they have no wine and tells the servants she might have thought, well, Jesus will send them out into town to find some more wine and bring it back before people notice that we've run out. I don't know that Mary was expecting a miracle, but the clue that she might have been suggesting that is given when Jesus says, what is that concern to me? My hour has not yet come.

And we know that Mary knew what Jesus' hour was. So as we conclude the first session this morning, one of the things to remember is there are no wasted words. There are no idle details.

There is no filler that's just there for style and has no substance in the word of God. Every word counts. Every detail matters.

And whatever portion of scripture we're looking at, we want to glean the maximum benefit by looking at the significance that goes beyond the superficial. Many people are going to see Jesus heal a blind man in John chapter 9. The blind man is going to be evident. Many people are going to see Lazarus walking around after four days in the tomb in John chapter 11.

And yet they can't get beyond the miracle itself to its significance, what conclusions they should draw, what repentance they should engage in, what seeking and following they should practice as a result of this miracle. The miracle is the means to an end. It's not an end in itself.

And looking at these details, just what we've seen so far, you get the idea that there is much more going on in each of these sign miracles than simply I'm going to take this physical situation and make it better. Especially when you get to the healing miracles, people are willing to stop short and say, well, here's a blind man, now he can see. Here's the lame, and now they can walk.

Here's the deaf, and now they can hear. But that was not the end of purpose. It is certainly included, but it pushes and reaches for a farther goal.

And in our own lives, we want to do the same. We want to take what we learn from the

Word of God and not just observe it and interpret it, but also see its wonder-working power in our daily life, the spiritual value, the transformational presence and power of God in our lives. We'll see more about that when we come back from the break.