

natural forces and processes involved in the working of it?

91. What, then, is the Force which must be in operation in the working of a miracle?
92. What obviously, then, made Jesus of Nazareth the Supreme Worker of Miracles?

Lesson Ninety-one

JESUS THE WORKER OF MIRACLES

(Concluded)

Scripture Reading: John 11:36-46.

Scriptures to Memorize: "And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I know that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me" (John 11:41-42). "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).

93. Q. What is the design of miracles in general?

A. Miracles are primarily for the purpose of attesting divine revelation.

God's progressive revelations of truth, communicated to men by the Holy Spirit, through human instrumentalities (2 Pet. 1:21—"men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit"), have invariably been attested by miracles. Cf. Exo. 4:1-9, John 20:30-31, Acts 2:22, Matt. 10:5-8, Luke 10:8-9, Mark 16:20, Acts 8:4-8, Acts 19:11-12, Heb. 2:4, etc. (Cf. I Cor. 2:4—"my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," etc.). It will thus be seen that *revelation* and *demonstration* go hand in hand, for the simple reason that they are complementary. Miracles,

then, are primarily for *evidential* purposes. They serve to attest not only the divine commission of the one who performs them, but the divine authority of his message as well. They are, so to speak, the credentials which God confers upon those whom He sends out into the world as His ambassadors. Hence they are commonly designated "signs" (*i.e.*, proofs, evidences) in the apostolic writings.

94. Q. For what purpose, then, did Jesus perform miracles?

A. Jesus performed miracles to prove that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

(1) In no instance did He work a miracle to benefit Himself. Mark 4:2-4, "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." (In other words, turn these stones into bread and thus appease your hunger). "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Again, when the Temple police came to apprehend Him at the midnight hour, and Peter drew His sword in defense "and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear," Jesus rebuked the Apostle saying: "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26:52-54). (2) Nor did He perform miracles for *benevolent* purposes primarily. This is evidenced by the fact that only three times, so far as we have record, did He exercise His miraculous powers to raise people from the dead. He knew quite well that even though He were to bring them to life, they would have to die a second time. And just before He raised up Lazarus, He offered up a prayer to the Father in which He expressed the desire that "the multitude that standeth around" might be convinced, by wit-

nessing the miracle about to be performed, that God had sent Him into the world (John 11:40-43). (3) We err greatly when we assume that Jesus performed miracles for *healing* purposes primarily. Any sect that makes the Christian religion give undue prominence to *physical* healing is thereby prostituting the Christian faith. The chief aim and end of Christianity is to heal men *in spirit* by reconciling them to God and nurturing them in true holiness. John 14:12—"greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father." The preaching of the gospel for the obedience of faith is a far greater work than the healing of the body. (4) *Jesus performed miracles primarily to attest His divine Sonship and Messiahship.* Cf. John 20:30-31. A superhuman proposition requires superhuman proof.

95. Q. How are the miracles of Jesus described in scriptures?

A. They are described as "mighty works and wonders and signs."

Acts 2:22—"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs," etc.: (1) "mighty works" in respect to their *nature*, or the greatness of the divine power manifested in them; (2) "wonders," in respect to their *effect*, or the impression they left upon all who witnessed them; and (3) "signs," in respect to their *design*, or the purpose for which they were performed.

96. Q. Classify the miracles performed by Jesus of Nazareth.

A. They may be classified as follows:

1. *The Miracles of Healing:* (1) The nobleman's son—of a fever (John 4:46-54). (2) Peter's mother-in-law—of a fever (Mark 1:29-31; Matt. 8:14-17, Luke 4:38-39). (3) A man full of leprosy (Mark 1:10-45, Matt. 8:2-4, Luke 5:12-16). (4) The man "borne of four"—of palsy (Mark 2:3-12, Matt. 9:1-8, Luke 5:17-26). (5) The impotent man who had been afflicted thirty-eight years (John 5:1-16).

(6) The man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5, Luke 6:6-10). (7) The centurion's servant—of palsy (Matt. 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10). (8) The woman who had been afflicted some twelve years with issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48, Matt. 9:20-22). (9) Sight restored to two men (Matt. 9:27-31). (10) Hearing and speech restored to a man (Mark 7:32-37). (11) Sight restored to a man (Mark 8:22-26). (12) Sight given to a man who was born blind (John 9). (13) A woman who had been afflicted eighteen years (Luke 13:11-17). (14) A man—of dropsy (Luke 14:1-6). (15) Two men—of leprosy (Luke 17:11-19). (16) Sight restored to a beggar (Luke 18:35-43). (17) Sight restored to Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). (18) Restoration of the ear of Malchus, the High Priest's servant (Luke 22:50-51). *In all, eighteen miracles of healing.*

2. *The Miracles of Raising the Dead:* (1) The widow of Nain's son—as they were bearing him to the grave (Luke 17:11-16). (2) The daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue (Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Matt. 9:18-26; Luke 8:41-42, 49-56). (3) Lazarus—when he had been dead four days (John 11:32-44). *Three miracles of raising the dead.*

3. *Miracles of Casting out Devils:* (1) The man—of an unclean spirit (Mark 1:23-26; Luke 4:33-37). (2) The demoniac who was blind and dumb (Matt. 12:22-23, Mark 3:19-30, Luke 11:14-23). (3) The two men in the country of the Gadarenes, who were possessed of demons, exceeding fierce (Matt. 8:28-34). (4) The dumb man possessed of a devil (Matt. 9:32-35). (5) The daughter of the Syrophenician woman (Matt. 15:22-28, Mark 7:24-30). (6) The lunatic boy, the disciples having failed (Matt. 17:14-21). *In all, six miracles of casting out devils.*

4. *Miracles of Supply:* (1) Water converted into wine (John 2:1-11). (2) Peter's net filled with an immense draught of fish (Luke 5:1-11). (3) Five thousand men, besides women and children, fed (Matt. 14:15-21, Mark 6:35-44, Luke 9:12-17, John 6:5-14). (4) Four thousand men, besides women and children, fed (Matt. 15:32-39,

Mark 8:1-10). (5) Securing tribute money from a fish (Matt. 17:27). (6) A great haul of fish (John 21:6-14), performed after His resurrection. *In all, six miracles of supply.*

5. Miracles of Deliverance: (1) Passes through the crowd at Nazareth, thus delivering Himself from His enemies (Luke 4:30). (2) The wind and the sea stilled, in obedience to His word (Mark 4:37-41, Matt. 8:23-27, Luke 8:22-25). (3) Peter saved, trying to walk on the sea, as Jesus was walking (Matt. 14:28-31; Mark 6:45-52). (4) The wind quieted, and the vessel is instantly at land (John 6:21, Mark 6:51-52). (5) Those sent to apprehend Him fall backward (John 18:4-6). *In all, five miracles of deliverance.*

6. Miracles of Judgment: (1) The swine run down a steep place into the sea, and are drowned (Matt. 8:30-32). (2) The fig tree blasted and withers away (Matt. 21:18-21, Mark 11:12-14, 20-24). *In all, two miracles of judgment.*

97. Q. Which is the only one of the miracles of Jesus that is recorded by all four Gospel writers?

A. The only one of the miracles of Jesus that is recorded by all four Gospel writers is that of the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

See Matt. 14:15-21, Mark 6:35-44, Luke 9:12-17, John 6:5-14. This feeding of five thousand men, besides the women and children, with five loaves and two fishes is, from every angle, the most stupendous miracle that He performed. The calling into existence of a quantity of food sufficient to feed such a multitude was distinctly *a miracle of creation.*

98. Q. What is the outstanding characteristic of the miracles of Jesus as a whole?

A. The outstanding characteristic of the miracles of Jesus as a whole, is their wide variety as to kind.

(1) *The miracles of Jesus are of such wide variety as to kind, as to positively forbid the notion that they are imaginary creations of overzealous enthusiasts. We assert*

confidently that no group of men ever lived capable of fabricating a collection of tales of alleged supernatural occurrences of so dissimilar and varied a nature as the miracles of Jesus described in the *Gospels*. (2) Again, we might of course account for the healing of diseases, or the casting out of demons, or even the raising of the dead, on *psychic* grounds, but surely not the blasting of a fig tree, or the calming of a tempest, or the feeding of a multitude with a few loaves and fishes! (3) *Note their variety well*: the stilling of the tempest, the turning of water into wine, the walking on the surface of the sea, the healing of all manner of diseases, the feeding of multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, the casting out of demons, the raising of the dead, the blasting of the fig tree; miracles of healing, miracles of deliverance, miracles of supply, miracles of judgment, miracles of benevolence and mercy, even miracles of creation! It will thus be seen that in His miracles Jesus touched life at every point and demonstrated His absolute sovereignty over nature in all her forms. (4) Take from the Gospel records the miracles of Jesus, and those records lose much of their beauty, pathos and power. It is one thing to hear what Jesus says—it is another to see Him in action. In the Miracles we see Him dealing tenderly and majestically with the problems of human life and living, with the hopes and fears and burdens of humankind. We see Him walking on the sea; and we know that He is able to quell the tumults within our souls. We hear Him commanding the winds and waves to be calm; and we know that the same Voice is able to speak peace to our own seething spirits. We see Him casting out demons, and we know that He is able to banish from our souls the evil passions which beset us constantly. We see Him performing miracles of mercy, and we realize that no life is so poor, so weak, so discounted by the world, as to be worthless in the eyes of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. We see Him opening the eyes of the blind, and we know that faith will

ultimately come into her own; that, though now we see as through a mirror darkly, some glad day we shall see face to face. We see Him halt the funeral procession on its way to the little cemetery at Nain, in order to raise the widow's son, and we realize that

"Life is ever Lord of death,
And Love can never lose its own."

We see Him calling Lazarus from the tomb, and we know that He spoke the truth when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life . . . whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." When we thus see His absolute sovereignty over the physical world, we trust Him implicitly in the realm of the spiritual. We believe that He is able to save unto the uttermost; and we are persuaded, as was Paul, that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day (2 Tim. 1:12).

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON NINETY-ONE

93. What is the design of miracles in general?
94. For what purpose, then, did Jesus perform miracles?
95. How are the miracles of Jesus described in scripture?
96. Classify the miracles performed by Jesus of Nazareth.
97. Which is the only one of the miracles of Jesus that is recorded by all four Gospel writers?
98. What is the outstanding characteristic of the miracles of Jesus as a whole?