

Messianic Miracles

Prayer

How many people here believe that Jesus performed miracles? How many people already knew that not all of the miracles that Jesus performed were documented in the bible? There were a lot that were documented. But this morning I want to focus on the fact that there were four that had extremely special significance. I think it is important that we understand why we believe that Jesus is our saviour. Today we will look at one of those reasons in four parts. I first heard about the messianic miracles from a Jewish archeologist name Joe Amaral.

Sometimes the history and context of what we are studying opens up a whole new world to us in our study of Jesus. When I saw the richness of the cultural significance here, I was blown away and wanted to share this with you, here this morning...

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The religious leaders of the Jewish faith at the time of Christ were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. I can always remember the difference between them because I use a memory trick. The Sadducees did not believe in eternal life – that is why they were sad-you-see. Regardless these were the religious leaders of the day. We will be discussing them as we go forward, so whenever I speak about them you will know that I am talking about the priests of the Jewish faith. The word Rabbi means teacher and applies to those who taught the word of God including the Pharisees and Sadducees.

They matter because prior to Jesus there was no Christianity. Hold onto your seats - Jesus was Jewish and attended a synagogue he was not Christian, he formed the foundation for the Christian Church.

And now... Back to the miracles of Jesus...

The Pharisees reacted strongly to four special miracles that Jesus did as they had a special significance. At a time prior to Jesus coming on scene the rabbis go together and divided the miracles into two separate categories.

- Those which anyone could perform if God empowered them to do so
- Those which only the Messiah could perform

This is the special category that we are talking about... When the rabbis could not perform these four miracles that we will discuss, they told the people that only the messiah would be able to perform them. Essentially they defined the criteria by which the people of the Jewish faith could identify the Christ.

Let me paint a scene for you... at that time in first century Israel the people were desperately waiting for the messiah. There were many pretenders that came onto the scene. The people of Israel wanted liberation as they had been under the oppression since their beginning as a nation. There were a lot of deluded people at the time. It became standard practice for the Church leaders to dispatch a group of

Pharisees to interview the messianic candidate and check him out. This is why we often read that the Pharisees were around when Jesus was performing miracles.

Because the nation was oppressed they believed that the nature of the messiah was a revolutionary ruler who would deliver them from their oppressors; a leader who would be their king and lead a revolt against the romans; ultimately securing their freedom.

The Pharisees were very interested in these upstarts because they were a threat to their religious authority in the church. They were very focused on their position and their power. They were so paranoid that they even sent out a group to check out John the Baptist. They wanted to find out If John was the prophet that Moses had declared that God would send. (CF. John 1:19-28)

If a messianic miracle was performed it was a given that the Pharisees immediately sent someone to investigate. Giving the Pharisees the benefit of the doubt, they were probably excited to see if this was he who was promised. Sometimes God allowed a person to perform one of the miracles, but the Pharisees were consistently disappointed because no one could perform all four.

They were looking for a king to come in Glory exemplifying the power of God. There were looking for a mighty king to lead them. To them Jesus was interesting but was essentially a peace loving beatnik, who was interesting but not really king material in their eyes.

Jesus was preaching grace and the Church was preaching law. The rabbis of the time did not see how the two were related. They did not see that Christ had come to fulfill the law not to abolish it. (CF. Matt 5:17) All of a sudden this messianic potential candidate was about to cripple their authority and religious practices. He was to calling into question their actions and motivations. So... Despite the messianic proofs they wanted him dead so their positions would not be threatened.

Bet your all saying... When is he going to tell us what the four miracles were?

Do you really want to know? Are you eager to discover what they felt differentiated the Christ from the rest of us?

Tune in next week for the exciting conclusion... Just kidding...

Here are the four Messianic miracles:

- Healing a leper
- Casting out a MUTE demon
- Healing a man born blind
- Raising someone from the dead after four days

The Healing of a Leper

Mark 1:40-45 *New Living Translation (NLT)*

Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed. "If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean," he said.

⁴¹ Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" ⁴² Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed. ⁴³ Then Jesus sent him on his way with a stern warning: ⁴⁴ "Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed."

⁴⁵ But the man went and spread the word, proclaiming to everyone what had happened. As a result, large crowds soon surrounded Jesus, and he couldn't publicly enter a town anywhere. He had to stay out in the secluded places, but people from everywhere kept coming to him.

In Mark 1:40-45 we see that a man with leprosy came to Jesus to be healed. The man declared his faith to Jesus by saying "If you are willing, you can make me clean", Jesus said: "I am willing, be clean!"
(Discuss requesting from God not telling him)

The culture of the day stated that a person would become defiled and unclean by touching a leper. The law stated that a leper was supposed to keep their distance from others and even stand downwind of people. The law even required that the lepers, when they saw people had to shout out "Unclean, Unclean!" as a warning. They were not allowed to associate with non-leprous people. (CF. Lev 13:45, 46)

Understand that Leprosy, at the time of Jesus, was considered a curse from God because of sin. The sin was either in your parent's lives or in your own, either way you bore the disgrace. The Pharisees position on Leprosy was that since only God could forgive sin, only God could heal a leper.

We saw that Jesus healed the leper in Mark 1:40 then we see him do it again in Luke 17:12-17

The Casting out of a Mute Demon

Matthew 12:22-23 King James Version (KJV)

²² Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

Jesus casts out a mute demon. Note here that the man is not the mute but the demon... to understand this messianic miracle we need to understand that the practice of the rabbis who would cast out demons. A possessed person was brought to them. The rabbis using God's authority would demand that the demon identify himself by name. The rabbis would then take authority of the demon using the

demons name and cast it out. A mute demon could not speak and therefore was not removable. The rabbis believed that only the Messiah would have the authority to cast out a mute demon.

How many times as Christians have we read over the fact that Jesus cast out a mute demon and assumed that it was a demon that made the individual mute; not the demon itself who was mute? Study the Word of God. There is a huge richness of information to those who diligently seek its pages.

The Healing of a Man Born Blind

John 9:1-7 *New Living Translation (NLT)*

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

9 As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ² "Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?"

³ "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. ⁴ We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. ⁵ But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world."

⁶ Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes. ⁷ He told him, "Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam" (Siloam means "sent"). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

This is historically significant as well as at the time of Jesus the people of the Jewish faith believed that only the messiah could heal a man who was born blind from birth. At the time people believed that blindness was a curse from God and so therefore only God could remove the curse. Jesus did it and the Pharisees paid attention. People recognized the man and identified him as the man who was blind from birth and he even confirms it himself in John 9:9 where he states: "I am the one." The people around him demand to know who healed him. Remember they were actively seeking their messiah. He talks to them about how Jesus anointed his eyes and told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. The people around him take him to the Pharisees. The Pharisees, of course do not want to give up any power or authority and so reject the healed man's account of what happened. They even suggest he is lying about being born blind. They call in his parents to verify his blindness and they confirm their shame. Remember, being born blind was considered punishment for sin. The Pharisees get choked at this point and ask who healed him and how. He describes what happened and attributed it to Jesus. He gets frustrated at this point with their antics and asks them if they want to become disciples of Jesus. They say that they follow Moses because he is a righteous man and that Jesus is a sinner. The blind man then traps them in their own doctrine by asking them how if Jesus is a sinner how could God use him to do this miracle. In John 9:32 he even rubs it in by pointing out to the Pharisees that nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

By this point the Pharisees are starting to get seriously upset because no matter how they try to defend their position and authority as Gods representatives, Jesus has become a serious threat to them. Starting to understand why they wanted to kill him?

The Raising of the Dead after four Days

John 11:1-44

New Living Translation (NLT)

The Raising of Lazarus

11 A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. **2** This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. **3** So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick."

4 But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this." **5** So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, **6** he stayed where he was for the next two days. **7** Finally, he said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

8 But his disciples objected. "Rabbi," they said, "only a few days ago the people in Judea were trying to stone you. Are you going there again?"

9 Jesus replied, "There are twelve hours of daylight every day. During the day people can walk safely. They can see because they have the light of this world. **10** But at night there is danger of stumbling because they have no light." **11** Then he said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up."

12 The disciples said, "Lord, if he is sleeping, he will soon get better!" **13** They thought Jesus meant Lazarus was simply sleeping, but Jesus meant Lazarus had died.

14 So he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. **15** And for your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there, for now you will really believe. Come, let's go see him."

16 Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go, too—and die with Jesus."

17 When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. **18** Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, **19** and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. **20** When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. **21** Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

23 Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 "Yes," Martha said, "he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.²⁶ Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God."²⁸ Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you."²⁹ So Mary immediately went to him.

³⁰ Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him.³¹ When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there.³² When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled.³⁴ "Where have you put him?" he asked them.

They told him, "Lord, come and see."³⁵ Then Jesus wept.³⁶ The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!"³⁷ But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

³⁸ Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance.³⁹ "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, "Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible."

⁴⁰ Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?"⁴¹ So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me.⁴² You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me."⁴³ Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!"⁴⁴ And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in grave clothes, his face wrapped in a head cloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

This is my favorite miracle... When the sisters sent word to Jesus they told him "Lord the one you love is sick." When Jesus heard that he said: "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

Did you notice that even when Jesus heard this, there was no sense of urgency about him? Did you notice that he waited two days? Jesus even said to his disciples "Let us go back to Judea." To which they replied: "but Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?" Jesus answered. "are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this worlds light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles for he has no light." Then he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." This is hilarious but his disciples completely missed what Jesus was saying... They replied, "but lord if he

sleeps, he will get better” I can just see Jesus rolling his eyes when he said to them “Lazarus is dead, for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

When Jesus got there Lazarus had been dead for four days. Remember the belief of the day. Anyone dead more than three days could not be raised again except by God. You see they believed that the body would start to decompose and that the spirit would not recognize the body to which it was returning after three days.

Martha came to Jesus and said “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that now God will give you whatever you ask.” Jesus said to Marha, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to Jesus: “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection of at the last day.” I love this next part... gives me goose bumps... Jesus said to her “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” To her credit she said: “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who was to come into the world.” When Jesus came to Mary, she said to Jesus “Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died.”

Jesus asked where they had laid Lazarus and went to the tomb.

Now pay attention here...

When Jesus saw here and those who were with her weeping he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. Jesus does not distance himself from our sorrows; that is why he wept.

Some of those around him said: “See how he loved him!” others said “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

He told them to remove the stone from the tomb. They told Jesus that Lazarus stunk as his decomposition had begun.

Jesus said: “Did I not tell you that If you believed you would see the glory of God?” “Jesus then said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” “Lazarus come out!” and Lazarus came forth, Jesus then said: “Take off his grave clothes and let him go.”

This fourth and final miracle was the proof that Jesus was the messiah based on the religious doctrine and practice of the Pharisees.

I ask you to consider that they then knew who Jesus was but held on to their church-ianity from that day forward. Look at John 11:53: “So from that day on they plotted to take his life.” This was the crossroads. They could no longer deny Jesus was the messiah; they had to choose to either accept him or reject him. We know what they choose. When will churches learn from this mistake?

We all need to decide in our hearts if Jesus is the messiah. To do this it helps to know why we believe.

Choose this day who you will serve... as for me and my house we will serve the Lord. (jos. 24;15)