

Jewish Religious Law and the Messianic Miracles of Christ

The actions of Christ directly related to Jewish law. He healed people and witnessed to the church according to their own laws handed down from the times of Moses.

1. Leprosy healing: There was no cure for leprosy. Leviticus 13-14 gave specific detailed instructions what the priests were to do when a leper was healed. The truth of the circumstances had to be determined and many offerings made. However, no Jew had ever been so healed since the time of Moses. Therefore, it was determined that a Jewish leper could only be healed by the Messiah.

When Christ first healed a leper Luke, a doctor, gave details in Luke 5:12. The leprosy was fully developed and the man would soon die. The leper recognized the authority of Jesus as the Messiah when he believed that Christ could heal him. After the healing, Christ told the man to show himself to the priests that they might begin their investigations and make a decision as to who He was. Next, we see that in Luke 5:17 priests had come from all around to Capernaum to hear and investigate Him. The stages of investigation were: observation, interrogation then decision.

This is why so many were present that the paralytic had to be lowered through the roof (Mark 2:4). Jesus first told the man that his sins were forgiven, knowing that this would create a negative attitude from the priests, but they were not allowed to question Him at this observation time. Mark 2:6-7 They reasoned that: 1. He could be a blasphemer or 2. He could be the Messiah. Jesus then heals the man to prove visibly that God had done something. After this event, the investigation entered the second phase where the Pharisee church leaders could question Him and raise objections during the investigation phase.

2. Casting out a dumb demon: By now the priests knew Jesus was not going to go along with Pharisaic Judaism. He would not accept their authority. He taught things that contradicted their interpretation of Mosaic Law. They had heard of the sermon on the mount where Christ had given a corrected interpretation of the righteousness demanded by Mosaic law. He also gave new insight of the righteousness necessary to enter heaven. Matt.5:20-30, 31-48, Matt.7:1-21 He corrected the way of giving in Matt.6:1-5 He corrected how to pray in Matt. 6:7-15 He corrected how to fast in Matt. 6:16-18

Then came a man to Him that was demon possessed, blind and mute. Matt.12:22-37 Jesus had chosen disciples and had given them authority to cast out demons. Mark 3:13-15 His own disciples thought His zeal bordered on insanity. Mark 3:21 The scribes and Pharisees thought he used Satan to cast out the demons. Matt.12:24 and Mark 3:22 Why all the uproar? Casting out demons was not all that unusual when a specific ritual was followed: The exorcist had to

establish communication with the demon with the demon using the vocal chords of the person possessed. Then, after the name of the demon was known, the demon could be cast out by speaking directly to the demon using its name. In the case of a mute person though, this was not possible. Therefore, the religious leaders were powerless to cast out this type of demon. The rabbis did teach though that the Messiah would be able to cast out a demon from a mute person.

Christ had now done this special type of miracle reserved for only the Messiah. The religious leaders would have to make a public statement about this miracle. They could either proclaim Him to be the Messiah or offer some explanation how he could do this work that they could not. They chose to reject Him and say He had done this by the power of the lead devil, Beelzebub. In effect, the church had made a verdict concerning Christ. They decided that he was not the Messiah.

The Jewish people had always followed their religious leaders views. Now, they had to decide what to do about Jesus being rejected by the Jewish church. Jesus had to respond to defend Himself. He explained that if Satan had helped Him , it would mean that a division had occurred in Satan's kingdom. Matt. 12:25-26 He reminded them that even their own sons cast out demons in verse 27. Thirdly, since He had cast out this dumb demon, it was an authentication that He was the Messiah. 12:28 It also showed that the spirit of God was stronger than Satan. In addition, He responded that this generations spiritual leaders had committed the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Matt.12:31-32 This was not an individual sin, but a National sin. God's judgement of this act came 40 years later with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Christ taught that individual sins could be forgiven, however, the sins of a nation would be judged while on earth. We need to fear what our judges today rule if they are against the laws of God. *Another result of this declaration by Christ was that God's offer of a Messianic kingdom in that day was rescinded. It would be re-offered to a later Jewish generation during the Millennium of Christ's second visit to earth.*

Now, the scribes, on the offensive , asked Christ for a sign of this truth. Matt.12:38, Mark 8:11 Christ's response was that they would only receive the same sign as that given by Jonah, which was the sign of the resurrection. This sign was given with the raising of Lazarus from the dead. (See page 4) *Up until this time the miracles of Christ had been done to prove Him as the Messiah. However, from this time on, His miracles would be for the training of the disciples for the works they would need to do as a result of His rejection. He would not remain on earth after His resurrection. In addition, up to now Jesus had done healing for the general benefit of the people without requiring the healed person to have faith. Now, healing was done to meet the need of the individual after a measure of faith was first given. Up to now healed people had been told to proclaim to others what God had done. Now, they were told to tell no one. The*

judgement about Him had already been made by the church. Before, the disciples had always proclaimed Christ as the Messiah. Now, they were forbidden to proclaim Him as Messiah. Matt. 16:20 Before, Christ taught the masses with clear direct words. Now, He only spoke in parables to hide the truth from the masses. Matt. 13:10-17

Christ's further response in Matt.12:41-42 was that since the people of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba had repented at the words of Jonah with a lot less revelation to put faith in, they would stand at the white throne judgement and condemn this Jewish generation for being guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit.

Final words of prophecy were given in Matt.12:43-45. A demon had left a man of its own free will seeking a better place to live. The man did not fill the empty place with the Holy Spirit and when the demon returned, it came with other demons to reside. The key to the story is in verse 45: "Even so shall it be with this evil generation" (the generation that began with the preaching of John the Baptist.) The Jews then were under Roman domination, but they had a National entity with Jerusalem and the standing temple. Forty years later the Roman legions invaded the land and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. They were then considerably worse off.

3. Another dumb demon evicted: Matt.17:14-20, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:37-43 Christ and 3 disciples had come down from the mountain after He was transfigured. They found that the other disciples had been unable to cast out a demon from a man's son. This test had been instigated by Scribes and Pharisees. Mark 9:14 This was a dumb demon as described in Mark 9:17. Jesus explained privately to the disciples that this type of demon could only be cast out by prayer (& fasting NKJ). They had to trust God to do the work for them. This type of demon was indeed special as Pharisee law had indicated. Again, Christ had proved Himself the Messiah.
4. Healing of a man born blind: John 9:1-41 this miracle was done during the Feast of Tabernacles, a very Holy time when no work was allowed. This will become important later. The disciples asked if the man or his parents had sinned? Christ answered neither had, but that God's works should be made evident in the man. The question relates to Mosaic law in Exodus 34:6-7 that a child can carry the sins of the father to the 3rd or 4th generation. According to Pharisaic Judaism a birth defect was due to a specific sin by the parent or the child before birth. When the child was conceived there were two inclinations present. The yetzer hara or evil inclination and the yetzer hatov or good inclination. During the 9 month stay in the womb a struggle occurred for control as to which inclination became dominant. If evil won out, the child might kick the mother in anger and rebellion.

Christ showed two fallacies in this reasoning. Children cannot sin while in the womb. Birth defects are not the result of a terrible sin. It is true that Adam's original sin causes earthly death eventually, but this man's blindness was to give God glory.

Note that the man was told to wash in the Pool of Siloam when there were many pools available. Why? During this Holy week there was a special ritual called "the outpouring of water". Priests came to this particular pool to fill their jugs for the ritual. Here also would be many people to observe what had happened in this miracle. The people knew the man and his infirmity (John 9:8-9) and were astounded beyond belief. When the man told his story, they asked "where is he that healed you"? The man, had not seen Jesus and could not begin to say where He was. Because of this stir, the Pharisees knew that they would have to investigate the miracle. They questioned how the miracle occurred. John 9:15 Because of the work done on the Sabbath, some quickly labeled Jesus a sinner. 9:16 Now the dilemma. This was a miracle only the Messiah could do, but Jesus had broken the law of no work on the Sabbath when the miracle was done and the people knew there was a contradiction. At the very least the man thought Jesus a prophet, for they could do miracles. But, this special miracle of healing a person blind from birth could only be done by the Messiah.

Then the parents were questioned. They confirmed that the man was their son and that he indeed had been born blind. Finally, the parents knew this verdict would impact the son greatly. Verse 22 indicates that if the man affirmed Christ as the Messiah, he would be put out of the church. They decided to let the son speak for himself. There were three levels of excommunication: The first level was a rebuke that lasted 7 to 30 days. The second level, or niddui was at least a 30 day discipline pronounced by 10 rabbis. (Examples: 2nd Thes.3:14-15 and Titus 3:10) the third level, or cherem, meaning un synagogued, meant separation from the Jewish community with the person being considered dead. (Examples: 1st Cor.5:1-7 and Matt.18:15-20) This third level would be the man's fate if he answered wrongly.

During the second interrogation of the man, the Pharisees were so disturbed that they became illogical. Verse 24 says they praised God because they were sure Christ was a sinner. This was not a cause for rejoicing! The man, although angry, correctly spoke that the Pharisees had been the ones to teach him the importance of this miracle. He asked them to explain how this contradiction occurred. After much of the same questions, the exasperated man asks if they were listening to him and due to the importance of their persistence wonders if they wish to be disciples of Christ. All tact had been lost. They responded in anger saying they were disciples of Moses and admitted ignorance as to who Christ was from. In the continuing battle the man certainly was giving Christ, God's son, glory. He accused the priests of having no basis for rejecting Christ as the Messiah. Their response followed from their

background understanding that surly this man was born blind in sin and yet he dared to teach them about Holy things? The irony is that the man truly was spiritually seeing clearer than they were. Still, he was excommunicated from the church. But, at the very end when Christ approached the man and told him who He was, the man gave Christ honor and worshiped Him in spite of all that he had endured. verse 38.

5. Lazarus raised from the dead: Jesus had promised another sign to prove Him Messiah to the church and the nation. Matt.12:38, Mark 8:11 It is significant that Lazarus had been dead 4 days. Judaic law taught that through the third day the spirit remained with the body and there was hope of resuscitation to life. On the fourth day the spirit left the body and went to Sheol or Hades and there was no hope for life without a miracle. When the church leaders met to decide what to do about this miracle (John 11:47-51), the end result was a decision that Jesus must die. Thus the church had decided: (1) Jesus was not the Messiah since He was demon possessed. (2) Anyone who followed Jesus would be excommunicated. (3) Jesus had to die for the good of the nation.
6. Jesus's final response to His rejection was to send 10 more lepers to the priests to give a last chance for them to change their minds. Luke 17:11-19 The first messianic miracle was performed 10 times over and the priests had to affirm every one of the healings knowing that only the Messiah should have been able to perform these miracles. Now, there were ten more witnesses that the priests had made the wrong decisions in rejecting Him. He was the Messiah they had looked for, but had not seen when presented before them.

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(Note by LCL) The decision about what to do with Christ likely involved fear by the priests for their own safety. Consider: The priests made life and death decisions about judgement for sinners. Adulterers and blasphemers, such as Stephen, were stoned to death. False prophets were killed. God also killed any false priest who dared to enter His Holy of Holies. Now came Jesus teaching that the religious leaders were incorrect in their teachings about (1) The righteousness required for Heaven, (2) How to give, (3) How to pray, (4) How to fast, (5) That adultery could be forgiven, (6) That the temple was to be a house of prayer instead of a marketplace .

If the priests affirmed that Christ was the Messiah, it meant that: (1) They had been wrong in their teachings, (2) Jesus would become their new ruler. How would the people and Christ react and discipline them? How would you vote if you had been a priest?