

JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY

Week 2 – The Credentials of the King; Messianic Miracles

The story of God's remarkable, gracious, loving plan of redemption continues. . . .

Matthew 4:17, 23-25 – ¹⁷ *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ²³ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. ²⁴ Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵ Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.*

After Jesus' rejection in Nazareth (Luke 4:16ff), He told the crowds who were imploring Him to remain, *“I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.”* ⁴⁴ *And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.”* (Luke 4:43-44)

Jesus had come – the kingdom of God/heaven was near the people because the King of the kingdom was on earth. But the nation of Israel needed to repent!

What did the children of Israel know about the Messianic Kingdom from their Scriptures? Isaiah 35:1-6 – *“The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; ² It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God. (What is the context? The Millennial Kingdom – when Jesus will be reigning) ³ Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; (Jesus is going to judge the nations when He returns at His Second Coming.) He will come and save you. (Only those who have come to faith in Him – Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus – will go into the Millennial Kingdom. ONLY believers will go into the Kingdom.) ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing.”* (God's restoration in the Millennial Kingdom will include physical restoration to the afflicted.)

Matthew 4:17, 23-25 – ¹⁷ *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ²³ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, (He was teaching the Jewish people; He was declaring Himself as their King.) preaching the gospel of the kingdom (the physical Kingdom of God on earth – when the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk, and those who weren't able to talk will speak), and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (Jesus, during His first coming, was giving a foretaste of the Kingdom. He was telling the people that He is the Messiah) ²⁴ Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵ Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.*

Why did Jesus perform miracles? Compassion alone? Scripture tells us in Matthew 14:14 that when Jesus saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick. Jesus' miracles PROVED that He is the Messiah – under Whose reign the blind will see and the deaf will hear, the lame will walk and the dumb will speak.

In the Gospel of John, the signs Jesus performed identified Him as the Messiah:

- “I Am the bread of life” (John 6:35) – What would the Jewish people think of w/ this declaration? God provided manna for the children of Israel in the wilderness.
- “I Am the light of the world” (John 8:12) – Jesus made this announcement shortly after the Feast of Tabernacles. During this feast huge lamps were lit at the Temple to commemorate the manifestation of God in the wilderness – the manifestation of God as the pillar of fire in the wilderness. The pillar of fire signified God’s presence and guidance.
 - The OT indicates that the coming age of the Messiah would be a time when the Lord would be a light for His people. Isa. 60:19 - *“The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the LORD will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory.”*
- “I Am the door” (John 10:9) – Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb. The blood on the door at the first Passover in Egypt redeemed them. The firstborn in homes with the blood on the doorposts and lintels did not die. God delivered them from Egypt.
- “I Am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11) – In Psa. 23:1 we read, “The LORD is my Shepherd. . . .” LORD – Jehovah/YHWH. GOD is my shepherd. Jesus proclaimed Himself as the Good Shepherd; He proclaimed His deity!
- “I Am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). The Pharisees taught resurrection. We see resurrection in the OT – Job 19:26 – *“And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.”*
- “I Am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) – Scripture teaches only one way to God – the Messiah (Deut. 18:15-18; Psa. 2:12; Isa. 53. . . .).
- “I Am the true vine” (John 15:1) – A great golden vine adorned the front of the Temple in Jerusalem. The golden vine symbolized the nation Israel (Psa. 80:8, 9) - *You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. ⁹ You prepared room for it, and caused it to take deep root, and it filled the land.”* Jesus is the true vine. Israel’s destiny is wrapped up in Jesus. We as believers must be rooted in Him.

“I Am” – Ex. 3:14 – when God commissioned Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt, He declared that He is “I Am that I Am.” God is the eternally self-existent One. YHWH is the Hebrew word used; each letter represents a different tense. God, as “I Am” is “the One Who is, Who was, and Who is to come” (Rev. 1:4).

Prior to Jesus' First Coming, the ancient rabbis separated miracles into two categories. First were those miracles anyone would be able to perform if they were empowered by the Spirit of God to do so. The second category of miracles was called "Messianic miracles," which were miracles only the Messiah would be able to perform. Jesus performed miracles in both categories: general miracles and Messianic miracles. Because of the rabbinic teaching - that certain miracles would be reserved only for the Messiah to do - whenever Jesus performed a "Messianic miracle," it created a different type of reaction than when He performed other types of miracles – the general miracles.

The First Messianic Miracle:

The first Messianic miracle was the healing of a Jewish leper. From the time of the Mosaic Law, there was no record of any Jew who had been healed of leprosy. Miriam, Moses' sister, was healed of leprosy (Num. 12). God directly healed Miriam. We read in the Hebrew Scriptures that Naaman was healed of leprosy (II Kings 5); however, Naaman was a Syrian Gentile, not a Jew. Luke 4:27 – *“And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”*

According to the Rabbis there was no cure for leprosy. Remedies for leprosy were left out of Rabbinic writings. Lepers were to be avoided. When a leper passed by, he/she was to shout “Unclean! Unclean!” The Rabbis confessed that they were powerless in the presence of this living death. They taught that the possibility of any cure for the leper needed to come from God! (Sanhedrin 98b/Talmud) One of the titles given to the Messiah by the Rabbis was – Messiah “the Leprous”. The Rabbinic teaching was that the King Messiah relieved all misery and disease. The Messiah would heal the Jewish lepers.

When we read Leviticus 13 and 14, we read of detailed instructions given to the Levitical Priesthood - detailed instructions as to what they were to do in the event a Jewish leper was healed. God did not tell the priesthood how to heal a leper. There are no instructions in Scripture about healing a leper.

When a leper approached the priesthood and said, “I was a leper but now I have been healed,” for the next seven days the priesthood was to investigate to determine the following:

- Was the person truly a leper?
- If this person was truly a leper, was he/she (vv. 29, 38) genuinely cured of the leprosy?
- If he/she was cured of the leprosy, what were the circumstances of the healing?

If, after seven days of investigation, the priesthood was firmly convinced that the person had been a leper and had been healed of his/her leprosy, then, on the eighth day there would be a series of offerings. The priesthood never had the opportunity to implement these instructions because from the time the Mosaic Law was given no Jewish person was ever healed of leprosy.

As a result, it was taught by the Rabbis that only the Messiah would be able to heal a Jewish leper.

The three Gospel accounts that tell us about the healing of a leper are: Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, and Luke 5:12-16.

Matthew 8:1-4 - “*When He had come down from the mountain, (following the preaching of the Beatitudes – the Sermon on the Mount) great multitudes followed Him.* ² *And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’* ³ *Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, (Jesus didn’t run from the leper; He didn’t avoid the leper. He touched this one who was looked upon as the living dead. Anyone touching a dead body, according to the Mosaic Law, was defiled. Here is Jesus – the Messiah – touching this one deemed dead – to heal him. That’s compassion. It’s also a SIGN) saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* ⁴ *And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”* (Indicating this was a Jewish leper who had to abide by the law)

- The leper worshiped Jesus. Only God is to be worshiped.
- The leper knew that Jesus could heal him. The leper clearly recognized the authority of Jesus as the Messiah Who had the power to heal a leper.
- This leper was Jewish; Jesus instructed him to show himself to the priest and to offer the gift/offering that Moses commanded.

What do you think might’ve been going through the minds of the priests in the Temple when a healed Jewish leper came to him? The Rabbis taught that the world was about to be purified when a priest pronounced a Jewish leper clean. They taught that the world was about to be purified by the coming of the Messiah! Acts 6:7 – “*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.*” Is it any wonder that the priests – a great many of the priests – came to faith in Jesus? Jesus healed many Jewish lepers and, by so doing, identified Himself as the Messiah. The priests witnessed the proof of Jesus’ Messiahship!

Jesus deliberately sent the cleansed leper (Matt. 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16) to the priesthood in order to get the Jewish religious leaders to start investigating His Messianic claims and to come to a decision regarding those claims. (NOTE: a Jewish leper would be required to go to the priesthood.). Jesus wanted to force the Jewish leaders to make a decision regarding His Person – that He was the Messiah.

Having sent the healed leper to the leadership of Israel, Jesus then “withdrew Himself in the deserts, and prayed” (Luke 5:16) Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus praying in submission to the Father’s will (Luke 6:12; Luke 22:41-42).

The Jewish Response:

After Jesus prayed (Luke 5:16)

Luke 5:17 - *Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal (them).* (The most acclaimed Greek NT text does not include “them”)

Why did the Jewish leaders from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem come to Jesus following the healing of the Jewish leper? To investigate Him. This was their response to the first Messianic miracle. According to Sanhedrin law, if there was any kind of Messianic movement, the Sanhedrin had to investigate the situation in two stages. The first stage was called the “stage of observation.” If the movement was declared to be significant, there would then be a second stage of investigation called the “stage of interrogation” when questions would be asked and objections would be raised.

As the Pharisees and teachers gathered, we read in Luke 5 and in Mark 2 of Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralytic man and then healing him. Mark 2:1-12 - “*And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. ² Immediately^[a] many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. ³ Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’ (Jesus knew that with all the Jewish leaders present, His statement was going to create a negative response.) ⁶ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ ‘Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’” (Psa. 32:5; Psa. 51:1-3; Psa. 130:4; Isa. 43:25). ⁸ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, ‘Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk?’ ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man (Messianic title from Dan. 7:13) has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ ¹² Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’”*

We read in the Gospels that the Pharisees began to follow Him and ask questions and/or raise objections (Mark 2:16, 18, 23-24; 3:1-2, 6; Luke 5:30, 33; 6:1-2, 6).

The Second Messianic Miracle:

The circumstances of the second Messianic miracle are recorded in Matthew 12:22-37 and in Mark 3:19-30.

Matt. 12:22 – “*Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and^[e] mute man both spoke and saw.*”

Why was this a Messianic miracle? Firstly, don't we see Jesus encountering many demons throughout the Gospels? Matt. 4:23-24 – He went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing. And people brought to Him those who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. Jesus demonstrated His ability to bind Satan and his demons! What will occur in the Millennial Kingdom? Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:1-3).

The act of casting out demons was not all that unusual in the Jewish world of that day. The Pharisees, Rabbis, and their followers had the ability to cast out demons. The Historian, Josephus, reports on a Jew named Elazar who performed exorcisms a number of times (Jewish Antiquities 8, 2, 5, 45-48). Talmudic literature tells us that Rabbis dealt with magic. Magic was an integral part of religion. Exorcism was thought to be therapeutic. The ancient world believed that sickness was caused by spirits that entered the body; therefore, removal of the spirits was thought of as a cure. According to Jewish thinking, exorcism required following a specific ritual. Firstly, the one performing the exorcism needed to establish communication with the demon. After establishing communication with the demon, the exorcist would then have to find out the demon's name. By the use of that name, he could then cast out the demon. Jesus used this Jewish methodology. In Mark 5, when He is confronted with a demoniac, Jesus asks, “What is your name?” The answer on that occasion was, “My name is Legion of which we are many.” “Legion,” in military terms, equated to 6,000 strong! However, Judaism's methodology was powerless regarding exorcising one kind of demon: the demon who caused the controlled person (the demon's “host,” so to speak) to be mute/dumb – to not be able to speak. Therefore, no communication could be established; there was no way of finding out the demon's name. The Rabbis had taught that when the Messiah came, He would be able to cast out this type of demon.

In Matthew 12:22 we read that Jesus exorcised the demon from the blind and mute man and that man could then see and speak. Matt. 12:23 - ²³ *And all the multitudes were amazed and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”* Messianic title; the Messiah would come from the lineage of David. The masses wondered if this Jesus was the Messiah. After all, He was performing the miracles that they had been taught from childhood – that only the Messiah could perform. They never asked this question when Jesus cast out other types of demons. However, when He casts out a demon from a dumb man, they knew that this was a Messianic miracle – and the Jewish religious leadership accused Him of casting out the demon by the power of Beelzebub (the ruler of the demons; next to Satan in power). Matt. 12:24 – “*Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, “This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.”*”

The Pharisees rejected Jesus' Messianic claims. And, the Pharisees claimed that Jesus Himself was possessed by “Beelzebub the prince of/the ruler of demons.”

How did Jesus respond? (Matt.12:25ff)

- This could not be true because it would mean a division in Satan’s kingdom. Why would a demon cast out a demon?
- This miracle authenticated Jesus’ claims and His message – and the Jewish leadership knew it!
- This miracle proved that Jesus was stronger than Satan rather than subservient to Satan.
- Condemnation – Matt. 12:30-37. Jesus accused this generation of being guilty of the “unpardonable sin.”
 - Blasphemy against the Spirit (Matt. 12:31; John 16:8).
 - Deliberate rejection of what they knew to be of God (John 11:48; Acts 4:16). The Jewish leadership attributed a work to Satan which they knew was of God!

Jewish Response

Matt. 12:38 – “*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”* They asked another sign of Jesus, as if Jesus had done nothing to authenticate His Messiahship. Jesus told them they would receive no more signs except one – “the sign of Jonah the prophet,” which was the sign of His resurrection. And this sign levied judgment upon them. They rejected Jesus; they brought upon themselves condemnation. Jesus’ resurrection proves once and for all that He is the Messiah.

Matt. 12:39-42 – “*But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they (Nineveh) repented at the preaching of Jonah (not the Messiah); and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.’”* NOTE: the men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba were Gentiles who had a lot less light or revelation from God; however, to the light they had, they responded.

Forty years after these words were spoken by Jesus, the legions of Rome invaded the land. Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple was torn down until not one stone stood upon another.

The Change in Jesus’ Ministry:

Until this event, Jesus and His disciples traveled all over the land of Israel proclaiming His Messiahship. Jesus sent out His disciples two-by-two (Matt. 10:5ff) to do proclaim that the Kingdom of heaven was at hand. However, from this point on, Jesus would forbid His disciples to proclaim His Messiahship. When Peter made his great confession in Matthew 16:16, and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus instructed Peter to tell no one that He was the Messiah! It wasn’t yet His time to die!

Following the rejection of Jesus by the leadership, Jesus began to speak in parables for the purpose of hiding the truth from the masses – and to concentrate on teaching the disciples. Matt. 13:34 – “*All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them.*” The unpardonable sin was the rejection of His Messiahship – of what the leadership knew to be true! Sufficient light had been given to them. They rejected the light they had; no more light would be given to them!

The Third Messianic Miracle:

The third Messianic miracle was the healing of anyone born blind.

John 9:1-2 – “*Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.* ² *And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”*”

The disciples’ question reflected Rabbinic theology. Some Rabbis taught that a pre-natal sickness was due to the sin of the fetus! Some Rabbis taught that the cause was the mother’s sin while pregnant. Jewish thinking in that day – personal sin was the primary, if not the exclusive, cause of all suffering.

John 9:3 – “*Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.’*” God’s sovereign purpose included both allowing this man’s sickness and this man’s healing – for the glory of God!

John 9:4-7 – “*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.* ⁵ *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’* (Not only does Jesus, as the light of the world, expose sin, He also provided physical light for this blind man) ⁶ *When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; (God created man out of the dust of the ground – Gen. 2:7) and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.* ⁷ *And He said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’* (which is translated, *Sent*). *So he went and washed, and came back seeing.’*”

Why did Jesus heal the man in this way? Why didn’t He speak a word and heal him? Jesus worked the works of God – on the Sabbath. John 9:14 – “*Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.*”

Jesus, in healing the man born blind, violated four of the Pharisee’s rules:

- Plowing – Jesus spitting on the ground might’ve caused the growth of a seed!
- Kneading – making the clay.
- Anointing – putting clay on the man’s eyes.
- Healing – considered illegal unless a life is threatened.

The Pharisees placed the law over and above mercy! Matt. 12:7 – “*I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*” Quoted from Hosea 6:6 which goes on to say, “. . . and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” Jesus emphasized the absolute priority of the law’s moral standards over the ceremonial requirements. The Pharisees focused on the outward – the external. Jer. 9:24 – “Let him who boasts, boast in this – that he understands and knows Me.”

“I am the light of the world” – Jesus ability to restore physical sight to a man born blind illustrates and validates His claim to be the Messiah Who is the only One Who can provide spiritual revelation and understanding to spiritually blind humanity. How do the Pharisees respond? They suppress the light! They claim that the man wasn’t healed (John 9:18a). Blindness in the Bible is a metaphor (figurative way of speaking) for spiritual darkness (II Cor. 4:3-6: Col. 1:12-14).

John 9:24-34

Willful unbelief always wants more evidence but never has enough. Willful unbelief is self-centered – desiring its own agenda.

All the miracles Jesus performed identified Him as Israel’s Messiah. The purpose was to produce the credentials of His Kingdom – that He had the right to rule in His Kingdom. He was the King! After the first Messianic miracle, the healing of a Jewish leper, the Pharisees investigated Jesus. After the second Messianic miracle, the exorcising of a demon from a mute man, the Pharisees reject Jesus’ claims of Messiahship. After the third Messianic miracle, the healing of a man born blind, the Pharisees reject the individuals who attest to Jesus as the Messiah.

John the Baptizer is in prison and he hears of Jesus’ ministry of – compassion – as he understands it. John is wondering if Jesus is the Messiah – shouldn’t He be throwing off the bonds of Rome – wouldn’t the Messiah free me from jail? Matthew 11:3-6 – “*Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: ⁵The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’*”

Psalms 90:14 – “*Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days!*” God desires that we KNOW Him and worship Him for Who He is.

Jer. 9:24 – “Let him who boasts, boast in this that he understands and knows Me.”

QUESTIONS:

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

Do you see the interplay between Jesus and the Jewish religious leadership any differently after discussing the Messianic miracles?

How did the Jewish people, not the leadership, respond to Jesus?

Did this study impact you? How?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Write out your observations regarding one or more of the passages concerning the “Messianic miracles” – the healing of the Jewish leper, the exorcism of the demon from the mute man, the healing of the man born blind.