

UNDERSTANDING THE “ONE STORY” OF SCRIPTURE

Week 16 – First Messianic Miracle

March 15, 2026

Prior to Jesus’ first coming, the 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 Holy Spirit anointed prophets, priests, and kings – empowering them to carry out specific tasks: David – Psa. 51:11 – *please don’t take Your Holy Spirit from me.* I Sam. 16:12-13 – *the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.*

The Holy Spirit empowered the tabernacle artisans to craft the implements for the tabernacle: the lampstand, the ark of the covenant and the gold cherubim, the brazen altar, the altar of incense, and the laver (for cleansing)

Second category of miracles was called “Messianic miracles” which were miracles only the Messiah would be able to perform – of which there were three according to the Rabbis/the Talmud.

Because certain miracles would be reserved only for the Messiah, whenever Jesus performed a “Messianic miracle” (labeled as such by the rabbis), it created a different type of reaction (on the part of the religious leadership and on the part of the Jewish people) 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 struck with leprosy by God and was healed of leprosy by God (Num. 12). 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 (a time of many miracles), and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”*

According to the rabbis there was no cure for leprosy. Lepers were to be avoided. They taught that the possibility of any cure for the leper needed to come from God! (Talmud: Sanhedrin 98b) One of the titles given to the Messiah by the Rabbis was – Messiah “the Leprous”.

Lev. 13 & 14 - detailed instructions given to the Levitical Priesthood as to what they were to do in the event a Jewish leper was healed. 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

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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, 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.

The rabbis taught that the world was about to be purified when a priest pronounced a Jewish leper clean – 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.*” 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 to get the Jewish religious leaders to begin investigating His Messianic claims and to come to a decision regarding those claims.

The Jewish Religious Leaders’ Response:

Luke 5:15 - *...the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities...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. Why did the Jewish leaders from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem come to Jesus following the healing of the Jewish leper? To investigate Him. According to Sanhedrin law, if there was any kind of Messianic movement, the Sanhedrin had to investigate the situation in two stages: the “stage of observation” and if the movement was declared to be significant, there would then be the “stage of interrogation” when questions would be asked and objections would be raised.

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).