

T H E
MIRACLES
O F
OUR LORD



Charles C.
RYRIE

ECS
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The Word to the World

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The Miracles of Our Lord
Charles C. Ryrie

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INTRODUCTION

This is a book about the miracles of our Lord. It does not attempt to vindicate them but rather to explain them, and in the explaining to show us more facets of the person who performed them. The explanations combine exegesis of the passages involved with the themes that emerge therefrom. Not only is it important to know the facts about each miracle, but also to glean from those facts the insights they give us about the Lord. In addition, I have tried to outline each miracle in a way that will, so to speak, attractively gift wrap the material for you.

Nothing that any interpreter can say could ever be as important as what Scripture itself records. I must urge you, therefore, as strongly as I can, to read the Scripture passage that begins each chapter. Many of the miracles, of course, are recorded in more than one gospel, but only the most complete account is included at the beginning of each chapter in this book. If other accounts are referred to in the chapter, you will profit if you take the time to look up those other references in your own Bible. If you own a harmony of the gospels where all the accounts are spread out side by side, then by all means use it. But at the very least, please do not skip over the biblical text printed at the head of each chapter.

May I also urge you to meditate on each miracle? Get the facts from the inspired biblical text, interact with the interpretations and ideas I offer you; then meditate and reflect on each story. Proper meditation will never create truth, but it may clarify and apply truth. You may want to study these miracles one at a time, with some time between each, so that you can think about each one more thoroughly. Meditate on them while you are driving or exercising or just doing nothing. Probe each miracle as fully as possible.

A. What Is a Miracle?

Many definitions are given, but one of the clearest is offered by

C.S. Lewis in his book *Miracles* (London: The Centenary Press, 1947, p. 15). A miracle is more than something unusual (though in ordinary speech we often call such events miracles). A true miracle is something beyond man's intellectual or scientific ability to accomplish. It is not natural, even though it may be unusual, a miracle is supernatural (that is, from God or Satan). It is more than a highly improbable event; it injects a new element (the supernatural) into the natural order of things.

To the nontheist that element is alien, but to the theist it is part and parcel of a total world view. Therefore, the question of the possibility of miracles is inseparably connected with the existence of God. If he exists, then miracles are not only possible but plausible. Certainly, then, if Jesus of Nazareth was who he claimed to be—God—we should expect that he performed miracles.

Four Greek words are used in the gospels to characterize our Lord's miracles. (1) *Dunamis* emphasizes that the mighty power of God has entered our world as displayed in Christ's miracles (Matthew 11:21; Mark 6:2,5,14; 9:39; cf. Acts 13:10). (2) *Teras* means "wonder" and underscores the extraordinary character of the Lord's miracles. It is always used with some other word (such as "signs and wonders") so that we will not think of the miracles simply as dazzling demonstrations (Mark 13:22; John 4:48; cf. Matthew 24:24). (3) *Ergon* means "works" and is used both for Christ's miracles and his ordinary deeds of mercy (John 5:20, 36, 7:3; 10:25). (4) *Semeion* means "sign" and indicates that Christ's miracles were to teach us spiritual truths (John 2:11; 4:54; 6:2; 11:47). The miracles are historically true, but they also serve to teach us heavenly truths that go beyond the factual accounts themselves.

B. *The Purpose of the Miracles*

The main purpose of the miracles was to teach, to reveal. Christ used miracles to demonstrate his deity (Mark 2:7), to support his claims to being the messiah (Matthew 9:27), and to serve as illustrations of deeper spiritual truths (see John 6:32–35). But the miracles also remind us of the consequences of sin—sickness, blindness, death—and of the power of the Lord to do something about those consequences.

That is why many of his physical cures illustrate so well the spiritual salvation he secured when he died and rose from the dead.

C. Some Characteristics of Christ's Miracles

1. They were performed for high purposes. He did not use them for his personal convenience (remember his temptation) but to meet definite needs of others.
2. They were not confined to a single sphere of life, so they could never be considered trickery. They were done on nature (Luke 5:4-7), on human beings (Mark 1:29-31, 40-42), and on demons (Mark 5:12-13).
3. They were done openly in front of spectators and witnesses. When the gospels were written, there would have been many persons living who had seen his miracles and who would have known and objected if the gospel writers had not accurately recorded the stories.
4. They did not always involve the faith of the person healed but sometimes were done in spite of the lack of faith (John 5:7).

D. The Number of Christ's Miracles

Thirty-five separate miracles done by Christ are recorded in the gospels. Of these Matthew mentioned twenty; Mark eighteen; Luke, twenty; and John, seven. But these are only a selection from among many that he did (Matthew 4:23-24; 11:4-5, 21:14). In this book I follow the chronological order of the thirty-five as nearly as it can be determined.

I sincerely hope that this book will help reveal to each reader more of the glory and beauty of the Lord who performed them. If the book does that, it will have served its purpose.

HIS FIRST MIRACLE

TURNING WATER INTO WINE AT CANA

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. ³And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." ⁴Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." ⁶Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. ⁷Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. ¹⁰And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior; but you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him (John 2:1-11).

The days of seclusion were at an end, and the period of public ministry was beginning. In this semiprivate and semipublic atmosphere of a wedding feast, our Lord's first miracle was performed. John 2:11 clearly states this miracle was the first, although the apocryphal gospels record a number of miracles that Jesus supposedly did before his baptism. They are never "signs," nor do they have any high purpose.

They consist of incidents where the Lord, as a boy, brought harm through use of a miracle to anyone who opposed or hurt him. These records notwithstanding, the inspired text makes it clear that he did no miracle until this one at Cana in Galilee.

1. THE SETTING OF THE MIRACLE: APPROBATION

In doing his first miracle at a wedding, the Lord gave full approval to the institution of marriage. He foreknew that later some in the church would despise marriage (1 Timothy 4:3); indeed as early as the third century, Cyprian decried Christians' attending marriage festivities.

Jesus' presence also should negate any suggestion that an ascetic life is preferable for a believer. Actually, asceticism can be an escape, for it is often easier to decline contact with the world than to be involved in it while always behaving like the son of God.

Furthermore, the Lord, by accepting the invitation to the feast, showed his approval of times of festivity and celebration for his followers. The lack of mention of Joseph in this account may mean he had died by this time (though John 6:42 might indicate otherwise).

Jewish weddings took place at the conclusion of a year-long engagement period. That time of betrothal was a much more serious matter than is our custom of engagement. It signified such a binding commitment that divorce was necessary to break it. At the time of the wedding, the bridegroom and his friends went in a procession, often at night, to the bride's house. Then the group returned with the bride to the groom's house where the wedding banquet took place. That feast might last as long as a week (Genesis 29:27; Judges 14:17).

2. THE STORY OF THE MIRACLE: SEPARATION

One word can be written over the story of the miracle itself: separation; the separation of Jesus from his mother by virtue of his words to her, and the separation of Jesus from all other mortals by virtue of his miracle.

This incident at Cana was the second of four recorded public encounters Mary had with her son during his ministry (Luke 2:41-52;

Mark 3:31-35; John 19:26-27). Seventeen years had elapsed since the boyhood incident at the temple. Now at this wedding banquet, the wine had run out. This was a serious matter that, had it not been remedied, might have opened the bridegroom's family to a lawsuit. At the very least it was a terrible breach of the requirements of hospitality. Mary appealed to Jesus to do something, and she obviously trusted that he could. But whatever she expected of him undoubtedly did not include what he did when he said, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?" (John 2:4).

The term woman was not a cold, disrespectful way to address a person (John 4:21; 19:26; 20:13,15), but it was surely unusual that Jesus did not use the term mother. His speech began to bring about a new relationship between him and his mother. And the words that follow indicate that change. No longer would the intimate and familial arrangements of the household at Nazareth apply. Now he was beginning his public ministry, and the interests and demands of his ministry superseded those of his family. Though it must have been difficult for her, Mary's reaction to this reminder of new priorities was full of faith and good advice: "Whatever He says to you, do it" (John 2:5).

The events of the story also separate Jesus of Nazareth from all other men and single him out as unique. Our Lord commanded that the six stone waterpots, which were in the house because of the purification rites of the Jews (Mark 7:3; Luke 7:44), be filled with water. That they were filled to the brim rules out any possibility of a trick being done by adding some already existing wine to partially filled pots. They were completely filled with water; then all that water was changed to wine. Water went into the jars; wine came out. Each jar held at least twenty gallons, so together they held enough for something like twenty-four hundred servings of wine. Here was something no mere man could do.

3. THE SECRET OF THE MIRACLE: CREATION

The miracle was a spectacular act of creation. It was not simply a matter of speeding up a process that had been going on. It was

accomplished in a moment, without grapes, sun, or time. Of course, it was a miracle that contained the appearance of age. The wine seemed to have come from grapes that grew and matured and were picked and pressed over a period of time. The actual age of the wine was only minutes; the apparent age was a season of growth and harvest.

The quality of the wine was attested to by the master of ceremonies. The words well drunk in verse 10 do not necessarily mean that the guests were drunk. Wine was diluted, usually with three parts water, which made it not as easy to become as intoxicated by that beverage as by “strong drink” which was undiluted.

4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MIRACLE: ATTESTATION

It had been hundreds of years since the Jews had seen a bona fide miracle. Miracles in the Old Testament were often for judgment; miracles in the New were for blessing. But miracles in both were for the glory of God. Since this miracle at Cana revealed the glory of Jesus of Nazareth (John 2:11), the people were being faced with the claim that Jesus is God. In this moment, his glory was revealed to attest to him as the creator who exercised his rightful power over matter to create wine. The glory of God is the manifestation of any of God’s attributes; here Jesus revealed his power to create.

5. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE MIRACLE: ILLUSTRATION

Some commentators make so much of the symbolism of the miracle that the historical facts fade into nothing. We must not forget that it was not some deep symbolism that impressed the disciples; it was the astounding fact that water was actually changed into wine. It was not any supposed symbolism in the water or the wine, but the creation of the wine that impressed them. Nevertheless, wine is a symbol of joy (Psalm 104:15), so the incident may also illustrate the joy that Christ brings (Psalm 16:11). It may preview the fact that his new message to the world would replace Judaism (Mark 2:22). Certainly the words of Mary in verse 5, “Whatever He says to you, do it,” contain a basic principle of the Christian life.

Turning Water into Wine at Cana

Lest people today use this story as a license to use wine freely, let them also read verses such as Romans 14:21 and 1 Corinthians 8:13 and 10:31. Let them also remember that today's wine is not first boiled before storage, then reconstituted with three parts water before drinking, as was true in the time of Christ. Today's wine is ten to fourteen percent alcohol as it comes from the bottle. That is why one five-and-one-half ounce glass of wine (about the size of a punch cup) raises the level of alcohol in the blood as much as a cocktail or two bottles of beer. This miracle is not meant to justify drinking or to debate the abstinence question. It is meant to display the creator in his glory. If we miss that, we have missed the purpose of the miracle.

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EXAM BOOKLET
AK '10 (3 UNITS)

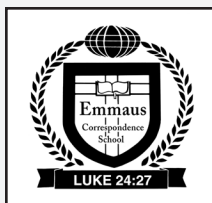
STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| A. blue | C. yellow |
| B. green | D. orange |

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Course Components

This exam booklet should be used in conjunction with the book *The Miracles of Our Lord* by Charles C. Ryrie, published by ECS Ministries © 2005.

How To Study

There are twelve exams, and each exam relates to one or more chapters of the book *The Miracles of Our Lord*. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapters through at least twice, once to get a general idea of the contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one exam per week.

Lessons You Will Study

EXAM 1

His First Miracle
Take Him at His Word
Omnipotence Confronts Impotence

EXAM 2

Successful Service
The Authority of Christ
Lessons Learned at Dinner Time

EXAM 3

Love and Law
The Miracle-Working Christ
Principles for Christian Service

EXAM 4

A Good Testimony
The Prince of Life
Pardoning the Unpardonable Sin

EXAM 5

In the Storms of Life
What If Christ Should Appear?
A Parable of Salvation

EXAM 6

When They Laughed at a Funeral
Faith and Folly
Stick Out Your Tongue

EXAM 7

The Lord Is Faithful
The All-Sufficient Savior
Principles For Prayer

EXAM 8

The Plight of All People
Feasting on the Bread of Life
Growing in Grace

EXAM 9

The Power of Christ
To Pay or Not to Pay
Confronting the World's Blindness

EXAM 10

Hypocrisy in Action
Inflexibility Can Be Good or Bad
The Lord of Circumstances

EXAM 11

The Society of the Thankless Nine
The Savior and His Salvation
Hypocrisy

EXAM 12

A Time to Heal
The Secret of Revival
Because He Lives

LESSON 1 EXAM

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

HIS FIRST MIRACLE

- 1. The author suggests that Jesus, in doing his first miracle,
 - A. gave full approval to drinking at a wedding
 - B. gave full approval to marriage
 - C. was trying to impress the guests
 - D. embarrassed the bride and groom_____
- 2. Changing water into wine was a miracle of
 - A. creation
 - B. regeneration
 - C. speeding up an ongoing process
 - D. slowing down an ongoing process_____
- 3. The purpose of miracles in the Bible was
 - A. to flaunt a person's power
 - B. to deceive people
 - C. to gather a following
 - D. to glorify God_____

TAKE HIM AT HIS WORD

- 4. In John 4, Jesus initially accused the nobleman and others present of basing their belief on
 - A. wishful thinking
 - B. seeing signs and wonders
 - C. the power of magic
 - D. what they had seen Him do at Cana_____
- 5. When Jesus cured the nobleman's dying son, one of the results was
 - A. the rejection of Jesus by the crowd
 - B. no one else asking for a sign
 - C. the father fully believing in Jesus
 - D. The approval of the Pharisees_____

