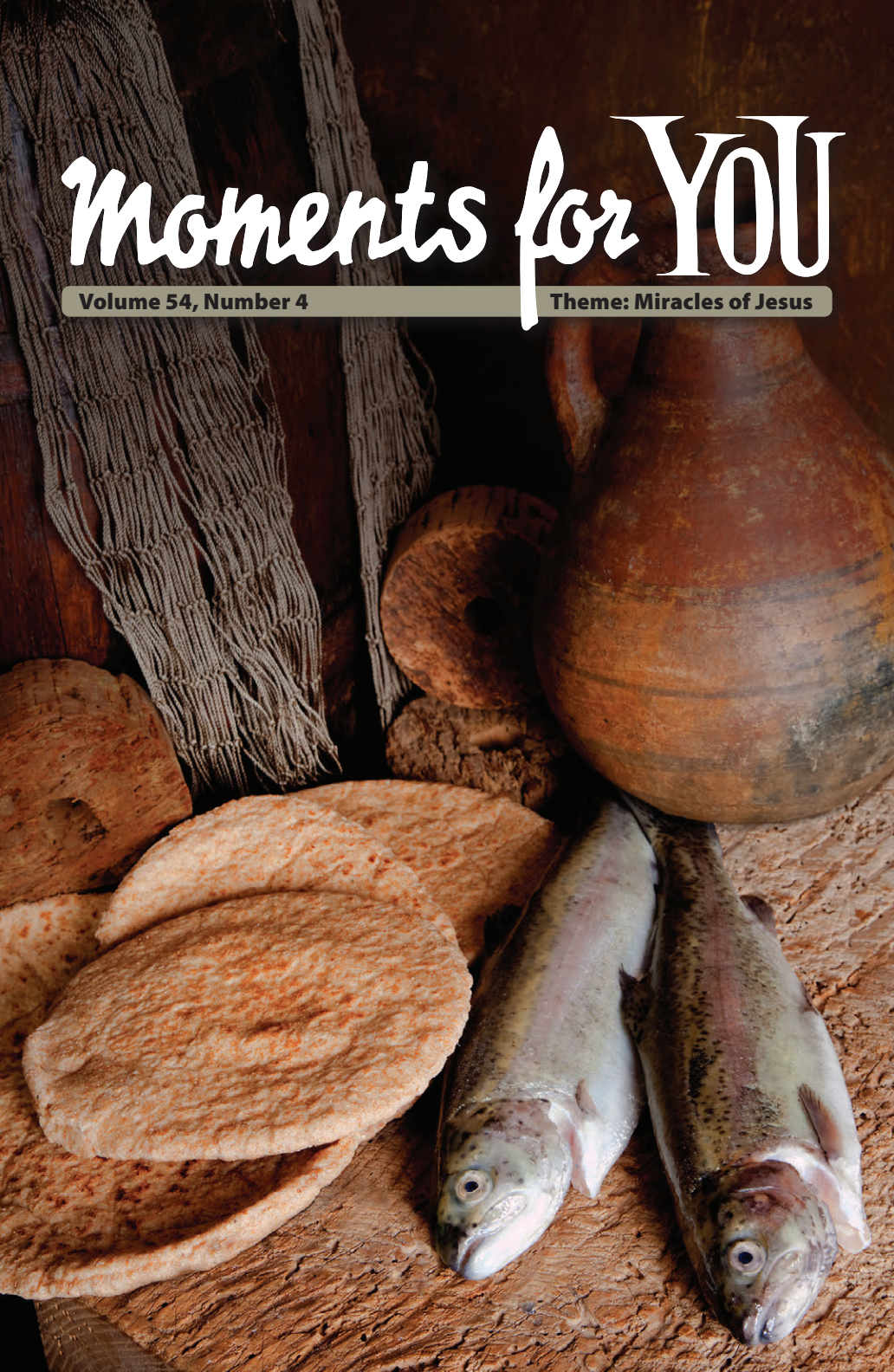


Moments for YOU

Volume 54, Number 4

Theme: Miracles of Jesus



MASTER OF MIRACLES

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Many definitions are given, but a true miracle is something beyond man's intellectual or scientific ability to accomplish. It is more than a highly improbable event; it injects a new element (the supernatural) into the natural order of things.

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). (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). (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 PURPOSE OF THE MIRACLES

The main purpose of the miracles was to teach—to reveal something about who Christ is and what He can do. 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.

In His miracles we see Him as Lord over nature, Lord over life, Lord over death, Lord over sickness, Lord over sin, and Lord over Satan. The miracles are clear and eloquent evidence that Jesus of Nazareth possessed powers that belong only to God and therefore that He is God Himself.

THE GREATEST MIRACLE

The three resurrections from the dead (the widow of Nain's son, Jairus's daughter, and Lazarus), portray our Lord as "the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). While those three returned to this life to die again, they preview the new kind of underlying life to which all believers will be raised by the Lord. And, of course, His greatest miracle—His own resurrection from the dead—seals that guarantee.

Because the tomb is empty, our Lord lives, and He lives in the lives of His children (Galatians 2:20). What does that mean for us in this day? It does not mean exemption from trials or sickness or attacks, but it assures us that the grace of our living Lord is sufficient in all circumstances (2 Corinthians 12:9). It does not necessarily mean He will give the same signs and perform the same wonders He did while He was here on earth, nor that we will perform them, but it does mean we can rely on His power to accomplish all His desires in our lives and in this world.

This is the Lord who saves all who put their trust in Him. This is the Lord who cares for His own through every circumstance of life. This is the Lord whom we love and serve forever!

—Condensed from *The Miracles of our Lord* by Charles C. Ryrie. Copyright © 2005 ECS Ministries.

MOMENTS FOR YOU Vol. 54, 4th Quarter, 2010. A quarterly publication sent free upon request as the Lord provides.

Publisher: Moments With The Book, PO Box 322, Bedford, PA 15522. A non-profit, tax-exempt corporation. Visit us online at www.mwtb.org **Senior Editor:** Tim Johnson **Editor:** T. Don Johnson



“I AM WILLING”

“When He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean” (Luke 5:12).

Jesus began His ministry teaching and healing and calling disciples unto Himself. Early in the Gospels we see a high concentration of miracles, as Jesus eagerly went about the work He had announced from the synagogue in Nazareth: *“To heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18).* In Luke chapter 5 we encounter a particularly vivid portrait of His saving power as Jesus confronts the dreadful sight of a man stricken with leprosy.

LEPROSY AND SIN

The Bible’s term leprosy describes a broad range of skin diseases, including psoriasis, lupus, ringworm, favus, and what we now know by the name of Hansen’s disease. The first thing we must say about leprosy in the ancient world is that it was a horrible condition. Particularly in its advanced stages it was debilitating and terribly disfiguring. It affected not merely the surface of the skin, with sores and splotches, but also corrupted the blood and rotted the bones.

Perhaps more dreadful than the disease itself were the social and religious implications of being a leper. According to the law, as set forth in Leviticus 13-14, a leper was banished from all human contact, removed from the family and workplace, from the synagogue and the market, cast outside the city to live in shadows. One reason for these restrictions was the risk of contagion. But it is also clear that leprosy represented sin.

Unclean skin signifies the work of sin upon us, the fruit of our own evil deeds and the sins of others as they have impacted us. Rotten bones signify the corruption of sin that is within us. As the leper is the living dead, so too are we *“dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).*

HELPLESS AND HOPELESS

This poor leper saw his horrid condition, and therefore he ventured to come to Jesus. Sadly, many of us fail to see our sinful condition. Many of us do not feel unclean because we have never committed adultery or murder, because our lies have been petty ones, or because we have stolen and never been caught. But if our conscience fails to show us the horror of our condition, God provides a mirror with which we can see ourselves truly. That mirror is His law, most central of which are the Ten Commandments. There we see the perfection of God’s character and of His divine standards. In that mirror we discover stains upon our face. We see that we are cursed and diseased and unclean.

This leper was not only horrible, but his case was also hopeless. Society had written him off and hoped only to see him no more. All that awaited him was misery followed by death. This leper knew himself to be hopeless, but I wonder if you do. You may seek self-improvement, you may make resolutions, but do you realize that your nature is corrupt? You may succeed at some surface improvements. You may scrub a splotch or two off the outside. But realize that they will only reappear, since the problem of sin is the disease that afflicts you, that resides within you, and for which there is no earthly cure.

JESUS IS WILLING TO SAVE

When this leper saw Jesus, he fell on his face and said, *“Lord, if Thou*

wilt, *Thou canst make me clean.*” There was some internal struggle at work within the leper. He knew that Jesus had the power, but he was not sure that Jesus was willing to use it in his case. How many people feel this way! They see well enough that Jesus is the world’s only Saviour. But is He willing to be their Saviour?

How beautiful was Jesus’ reply, plain and direct: *“I will”* (Luke 5:13). Why was Jesus willing to make this wretched man clean? Mark, in his account of this miracle, gives us one answer. He says that Jesus was *“moved with compassion”* (Mark 1:41). Jesus is willing to save you, not because of what is in you, not because you are lovely or lovable, but because of what is in Him. He is *“moved with compassion.”*

THE HEALING TOUCH

Luke 5:13 wonderfully tells us that Jesus *“put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.”* What this means for you is that there is cleansing for you, no matter how horrid the scars upon your heart, no matter how wretched the stench from your soul, no matter how unclean and defiled and impure you are. What a picture this is of the total instantaneous cleansing that is available for sinners who come to Jesus. Because of this God is able to say, *“I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”* (Hebrews 8:12). Therefore the psalmist can sing, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us”* (Psalm 103:12).

God has made a way for you. The apostle Paul tells us this: *“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.... God commendeth His love toward us, in that,*

while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6,8). Therefore there is no reason to withhold your shame, your filth, your fears from Him who came as the great Healer, even of lepers like us. You may only find grace to say, *“Lord, I don’t know if you are willing in a case so foul as mine. But I know that you can, and I come to you for cleansing.”* Will He not say to you what He delighted to say to this poor leper? *“I will: be thou clean!”*

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REGENERATION: A MIRACLE

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17,18).

There is one miracle which does occur often today. This is the miracle of individual regeneration. This, indeed, is a marvelous work of divine creation. Here is a person who was *“dead in trespasses and sins”* who has suddenly been *“quicken’d”* (that is, *“made alive”*) *“together with Christ”* (Ephesians 2:1-5). He has been *“born again,”* this time not by natural human birth, but *“born of the Spirit”* (John 3:3,8), and his whole life, especially his heart, has been changed. He has been delivered *“from the power of darkness”* and *“translated”* into the kingdom of God’s Son, *“in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins”* (Colossians 1:13,14). God had made Christ *“to be sin”* for him, that he *“might be made the righteousness of God in [Christ]”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Like all true Christians, he has been saved by God’s grace through faith in Christ, and *“created in Christ Jesus unto good*

works” (Ephesians 2:10).

Note the fact that he has been created in Christ, and is thus a new creation in Him. His old life has passed away and a new life begun. This is surely a miracle in the truest sense of the word. He had been going down to everlasting death and Hell, but now is on the way to Heaven and eternal life with the Lord. This miracle of creation happens frequently, whenever a person truly turns to Christ for forgiveness and salvation. I experienced this miracle long ago—and I hope it has happened (or will soon happen) to you as well.

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A Christian is not like a tadpole who has become a frog. A Christian is like a frog who has become a prince by the kiss of grace. It is a miracle!
—Adrian Rogers

JOHN’S “SIGN” MIRACLES

“Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:30,31).

John (as guided by the Holy Spirit) chose eight of Jesus’ miracles and recorded them as special “signs” of the glory of Jesus Christ. Although some recognized and believed these signs (2:11), many did not (12:37). Let us now consider the miraculous “signs” recorded by John.

1. CHANGING WATER INTO WINE

John identifies the miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee as being the first (2:1-11). This miracle demonstrates the seeds of the move from law to grace. John had previously

demonstrated, *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (1:17)*. The water, which had been set aside for the rituals of purification, is a reminder of the legal requirements imposed on the population at that time. The Pharisees were legislating joy out of the nation. Jesus turned the water into wine, a symbol of joy and of the New Covenant (Luke 22:20), where it represents the blood of Messiah shed for sin.

2. HEALING A RULER’S SON

The second sign that John records is the healing of the sick son of a royal official, a boy who was at the point of death (4:46-54). Capernaum, the location of this sign, was the place where Jesus made His home during the time of His public ministry. It was a place that saw many of His miracles, described by Jesus as *“mighty works”* (Matthew 11:20). Yet, the people of Capernaum generally remained unrepentant, and rejected His Messianic claim. Signs and miracles do not guarantee faith in Jesus.

3. HEALING A DISABLED MAN

The third sign is the healing of a severely disabled man (5:1-16). The long-term invalid had been chronically ill and disadvantaged for 38 years. This period of time reminds us of the generation which wandered in the wilderness for a further 38 years after God had found them guilty of their sin (Deuteronomy 2:14).

By healing at the pool of Bethesda, served by the fountain of Siloam, Jesus brings into focus the prophecy of Zechariah 13:1, *“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”*

4. FEEDING A LARGE CROWD

The fourth miracle that John records is the feeding of the great crowd (6:5-14). The crowd, in Messiah’s

eyes, was like a flock of sheep without a shepherd, and He viewed them with compassion. Feeding the multitude showed Jesus as the incarnate God, who came from Heaven. He alone was able to say, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst" (6:35).

5. WALKING ON THE SEA

The fifth significant miracle was that which took place on the Sea of Galilee at night (6:16-21). In this miracle, the divine Son of God demonstrated again that He would thwart every attempt by Satan to drag Him down. Not only did Jesus walk on the water, but He also stilled the storm, saved Peter from sinking beneath the waves, and brought the boat safely to shore. After seeing the multitude fed, Peter saved, and the devil defeated, it is no wonder that they "worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33).

6. HEALING THE MAN BORN BLIND

This sixth sign takes place at the end of the feast of Tabernacles (9:1-41). To heal the blind man, Jesus made a clay poultice out of dust and spit, and applied it to his eyes. He then instructed him to go to the pool of Siloam and wash away the mud. When he washed, he was able to see clearly. The two ingredients of the poultice, dust and spittle, represent the natural man (Genesis 2:7; 3:19) and the shame and humiliation of sin. On the other hand, the water from the pool of Siloam represented the Spirit of God. This symbolism was at the heart of the ceremonies which took place during the week of the festival, and was the reason Jesus "stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow

rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit)" (7:37-39).

7. RAISING A DEAD MAN

The seventh sign/miracle is the raising of Lazarus (11:1-44). When Jesus received news that His friend was at the point of death, He not only delayed until Lazarus was dead, but also waited until he had been buried and entombed for four days. His intention was to demonstrate to the leaders of the Jewish nation that He was able to raise Lazarus, not just from the grave, but also from Hades. Because of the framework of Jewish belief at that time, they believed that the soul did not descend into Hades until after three days. Jesus needed to wait until the fourth day to demonstrate fully that His power reached to the grave and beyond.

8. THE MIRACULOUS CATCH OF FISH

The last sign recorded in John's gospel is that which took place at the Sea of Galilee after the resurrection of Messiah (21:1-14). Here Jesus works a double miracle. First, He demonstrated that fishing was not the disciples' future, as they worked all night yet their nets were empty. Then, in the morning, He stood on the shore and instructed them to cast their nets again, this time on the other side of the boat. They caught 153 large fish. On bringing the catch to shore, they were invited to a breakfast of bread and fish that had already been prepared.

In the first sign, Jesus provided wine. Here, at the lakeside, He provided bread. Significantly, table fellowship is placed at the heart of the Church's activities, where bread and wine symbolically represent the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16).

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MIRACLE MATH

“When He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to Heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. . . . And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men” (Mark 6:41,44).

This is a miracle which cannot be explained away. The vast number of witnesses makes this impossible. There are some miracles which seem contrary to the laws of nature, but this one was also contrary to the laws of mathematics. Five loaves and two fish were probably broken up into at least 10,000 portions, for there were 5,000 men in addition to women and children. Each family, therefore, received roughly one-thousandth part of a loaf, and after they had eaten and were filled, twelve baskets full of fragments remained. Even the leftovers were of far greater bulk than the original loaves and fish.

Here was subtraction without depletion, multiplication by means of subtraction, addition caused by division, and fractions which were larger than the whole!

—From *The Study of the Miracles* by Ada R. Habershon.

MIRACLE MESSAGES

It is clear that the miracles of Christ contain messages about His person, power, and ministry. Sometimes they were also accompanied by specific words to those who witnessed or were blessed by the miracle. Let us look at four of these messages from Luke chapter 8.

“WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?” (vv. 22-25)

As Jesus and His disciples cross over the Sea of Galilee, a storm swamps and threatens to sink their

boat. Jesus, who had been resting peacefully, was awakened by the terrified disciples. After He calmed the wind and the waves with a simple word of rebuke, He questioned the disciples’ faith. Can any ship with Jesus on board really sink? Is He not with us today? (Matthew 28:20).

“RETURN TO THINE OWN HOUSE” (vv. 26-39)

The man who was miraculously delivered from the power of the devil wanted to be with Jesus. Instead, Jesus sent him home to be a witness to God’s saving grace. Obediently, “he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him” (v. 39). Is there a better place to begin sharing the good news of Jesus Christ than at home with our family and friends?

“BE OF GOOD COMFORT” (vv. 43-48)

Unhealthy and unclean, the woman who secretly touched the edge of Jesus’ garment did not want to be noticed. However, after healing her body, Jesus lovingly lifted up her soul as well: “Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace” (v. 48). Let us not be afraid to boldly approach the “throne of grace” at any time (Hebrews 4:16).

“GIVE HER SOME FOOD” (vv. 41,42,49-55)

While the exact words of this message are not recorded, the point is clear. After miraculously raising the girl back to life, he instructed her parents to care for her. While Jesus had cured her of the condition which had taken her life, she was still in need of being nourished. From this we can glean two points. First, God’s miracles are never intended to replace our own responsibilities. Second, even though a believer is a new creation in Christ, we must not neglect our source of strength: “desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). ☒

“JESUS ... WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD” (ACTS 10:38)

Here is a partial list of some of the miracles of Jesus. There were undoubtedly many others, for even the Scriptures do not contain them all (John 20:30). Also note that many times Jesus healed large groups of people at one time (Matthew 12:15), and displayed other supernatural powers such as knowing the thoughts of those around Him (Luke 6:8) or omnisciently seeing and knowing things from afar (John 1:47-48; Luke 19:30).

Cleansing a Leper	Feeding the Four Thousand
. <i>Matt. 8:2; Mark 1:40; Luke 5:12</i>	. . . . . <i>Matt. 15:32; Mark 8:1</i>
Healing a Centurion's Servant.	Temple Tax in the Fish's Mouth.
. <i>Matt. 8:5; Luke 7:1</i>	. . . . . <i>Matt. 17:24</i>
Healing Peter's Mother-in-law	Healing Blind Bartimaeus
. <i>Matt. 8:14; Mark 1:30; Luke 4:38</i>	. . . . . <i>Matt. 20:30; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35</i>
Stilling the Storm.	Withering the Fig Tree
. <i>Matt. 8:23; Mark 4:35; Luke 8:22</i>	. . . . . <i>Matt. 21:18; Mark 11:12</i>
Demons Entering a Herd of Swine	Casting Out an Unclean Spirit.
. <i>Matt. 8:28; Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26</i>	. . . . . <i>Mark 1:23; Luke 4:33</i>
Healing a Paralytic.	Healing a Deaf Mute <i>Mark 7:31</i>
. <i>Matt. 9:2; Mark 2:3; Luke 5:18</i>	Healing a Blind Man. <i>Mark 8:22</i>
Raising the Ruler's Daughter.	First Catch of Fish <i>Luke 5:1</i>
. <i>Matt. 9:18,23; Mark 5:22,35; Luke 8:49</i>	Raising a Widow's Son at Nain
Healing the Hemorrhaging Woman . . . . .	. . . . . <i>Luke 7:11</i>
. <i>Matt. 9:20; Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43</i>	Healing the Infirm, Bent Woman.
Healing Two Blind Men <i>Matt. 9:27</i>	. . . . . <i>Luke 13:10</i>
Curing a Demon-Possessed, Mute Man	Healing the Man with Dropsy
. <i>Matt. 9:32</i>	. . . . . <i>Luke 14:1</i>
Healing a Man's Withered Hand	Cleansing Ten Lepers <i>Luke 17:11</i>
. <i>Matt. 12:9; Mark 3:1; Luke 6:6</i>	Restoring a Servant's Ear <i>Luke 22:51</i>
Curing a Demon-Possessed, Blind and Mute Man	Turning Water Into Wine. <i>John 2:1</i>
. <i>Matt. 12:22; Luke 11:14</i>	Healing the Nobleman's Son
Feeding the Five Thousand . . . . .	. . . . . <i>John 4:46</i>
. <i>Matt. 14:13; Mark 6:30; Luke 9:10; John 6:1</i>	Healing an Infirm Man at Bethesda
Walking on the Sea . . . . .	. . . . . <i>John 5:1</i>
. <i>Matt. 14:25; Mark 6:48</i>	Healing the Man Born Blind
Healing the Gentile Woman's Daughter . . . . .	. . . . . <i>John 9:1</i>
. <i>Matt. 15:21; Mark 7:24</i>	Raising Lazarus From the Dead
Healing the Demon-possessed, Epileptic Boy . . . . .	. . . . . <i>John 11:43</i>
. <i>Matt. 17:14; Mark 9:17; Luke 9:38</i>	Second Catch of Fish <i>John 21:1</i>