

THE GREATEST MIRACLE

The Jews of Jesus' day commonly drew a link between sin and sickness. They looked forward to the coming Messiah who would remove both sin and sickness as He brings in the kingdom. The coming of the kingdom brings forth both deliverance from sin as well as from sickness. This connection is emphasized in the OT Scriptures, and it is the Messiah who brings it about.

(Kingdom Forgiveness Context)

Jeremiah 50:20 (NKJV)

20 In those days and in that time," says the Lord, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; And the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; For I will pardon those whom I preserve.

(Kingdom Healing Context)

Isaiah 35:5–6 (NKJV)

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. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.

Isaiah 33:24 (NKJV)

24 And the inhabitant will not say, "I am sick"; The people who dwell in it will be forgiven their iniquity.

How does this happen? It doesn't happen apart from the divine-human Messiah who brings it about when He comes to usher in the kingdom.

The point being emphasized is that the kingdom will be a time when the Son of Man brings about cleansing from sin in combination with physical healing for all those who put their faith in Him. What we have in Jesus' earthly ministry is a little snapshot of this coming kingdom reality. Again, He was the King presenting the kingdom to Israel on the condition of repentance. And the miracles He did were evidence that He was indeed the Messiah in keeping with OT prophecy.

The problem was that Israel did not come to repentance, and so the kingdom offer was withdrawn at that time and postponed. It is still coming, but it is a future reality that awaits Israel's repentance. In the meantime, Christ is building His Church. Upon removal of the Church (via the rapture), God will bring judgment on the world, resulting in the conversion of Israel.

This will climax in the Second Coming, where Christ will usher in His kingdom.

In Matthew 9:1-8 in doing this miracle of declaring the paralytic forgiven and then healing him, Christ showed that He is indeed the prophesied Messianic “**Son of Man**” (combination God-Man) who is able to forgive sins on earth and bring about kingdom conditions described in the OT in places like Isa. 33; 40; 44; and 60 (cf. Isa. 33:24; 40:1-2; 44:21-22; 60:20-21).

Here is how the logic, if followed consistently, would look. When Jesus healed the man born blind in John 9, here is how he reasoned with the Jewish religious leaders...

John 9:30–31 (NKJV)

30 The man answered and said to them, “Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet **He has opened my eyes!**

31 Now **we know that God does not hear sinners**; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.

Proper reasoning goes like this: If Jesus was indeed a blasphemer in pronouncing forgiveness, then He would not be able to perform a wholesome physical miracle that is clearly of God. But since He did the physical miracle, the spiritual reality of forgiving sins must also be true. That is consistent spiritual thinking. But alas, the religious leaders in Israel largely refused to be consistent with the logic of the truth. No wonder Jesus called them out as having evil thoughts in their hearts.

“Miracles in the Gospels and Acts frequently occur to substantiate those whom God used to initiate a new movement and to validate new revelation.” – ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

Hebrews 2:3–4 (NKJV)

3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the **first** began to be spoken by the **Lord**, and was confirmed to us by those who **heard Him** [apostles],

4 God also bearing witness both with **signs and wonders**, with various **miracles**, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

The ministry of Christ, and by extension His apostles, who uniquely were His authoritative representatives, had their ministries validated by special signs and wonders. But Christ’s ministry was the most unique as He did

things such as directly forgiving sins which no one else ever did. He was unique for indeed He was the God-Man Who is the Messiah!

Matthew 9:7 (NKJV)

7 And he arose and departed to his house.

This must have completely stymied Christ's critics for we hear no more about them. None of the 3 synoptic gospels (Mt., Mk, and Lk) mention any response from the scribes. The fact that He instantly healed this paralyzed man showed that indeed He did have the authority to forgive sins. It was undeniable! This is what has been termed "in your face" testimony!

Not only was the paralytic physically healed, in this miracle he also had full assurance that he was forgiven, and the charge of blasphemy was roundly refuted.

Matthew 9:8 (NKJV)

8 Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

The miracle was amazing causing the multitudes who saw it to be afraid and glorify God. The word translated here as "**marveled**" in the NKJV is more literally "**they were afraid**". This kind of supernatural power on display was awesome but it also was terrifying.

Mark 2:12 adds that the people said, "**We never saw anything like this!**" Never before had they seen a pronouncement of forgiveness followed up by a supernatural miracle of physical healing of a completely disabled person.

What is the greatest thing Jesus ever did in His pre-cross earthly ministry? He healed the sick, He raised the dead, He cast out demons, He calmed the storm, He fed the multitudes. But I submit to you that the greatest thing that He did was provide forgiveness for those who believe in Him. And He proved to have the authority to forgive sins by instantly restoring the paralytic to full health. No one in the history of the world has ever done that before or after. This combination of providing forgiveness with incontrovertible supernatural proof is unparalleled.

"You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call

him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” – C.S. Lewis

Lewis was absolutely right: Jesus is either a Liar, a Lunatic, or He is Lord!

Who is He to you?

Acts 16:31 (NKJV)

31 So they said, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved**, you and your household.”