

# Dr. Robert C. Newman, Miracles, Session 7, Jesus' Miracles Over the Spiritual Realm

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We're continuing our course, The Miraculous and the Miracles of Jesus. We've looked at four lectures on the miraculous, and this is now the third lecture on the miracles of Jesus. We looked at Jesus' miracles over the natural realm and Jesus' miracles over the human realm, and now we look at Jesus' miracles over the spirit realm.

As we are using this phrase in distinction from the human realm, in the previous talk, we here refer to spirit beings other than humans, in this case, what we call demonic beings. Among the more secular inhabitants of our modern Western world, demons are typically relegated to the realm of fairy tales and superstition. This is not the view of the Bible, and we should not be tempted to follow the lead of theological liberals of the 19th and 20th centuries in attempting to edit these out of Christianity.

We will not have space here to discuss the biblical teaching on spirit beings, but I've done a bit of this in my PowerPoint talk, Angels and Demons, which is also on our IBRI website, [www.ibri.org](http://www.ibri.org). I've also looked at the possibility of detecting the action of such beings in a more or less scientific way, we might say, in another talk called Evidence of Angels? also on that site. Let's look first of all at the Gadarene demoniacs found in Matthew 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8. We're going to look at the Matthew passage, which mentions the two demoniacs. When he, Jesus, arrived at the other side of the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him.

They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" Some distance from them, a large herd of pigs was feeding.

The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs!" He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town, and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region." Well, that's all we get in the Matthew account, longer in Mark 5, 1-20, etc.

The historicity of events and occasions is closely related to the miracle of the calming of the storm, which immediately follows in all three synoptics. It's still early in Jesus' Galilean ministry. Jesus is met by the demoniacs as he and the disciples disembark.

There are several liberal explanations for this. This is Alfred Plummer's list. The whole story is a myth.

Or, the healing is historical, the pigs are not. Or, the demoniacs frightened the pigs, who stampeded down the hill. The drowning of the pigs is an accident occurring at about the same time.

Or, the demoniacs are merely insane. Jesus humors them with regard to the pigs, but the story is taken as historical. That's a rather extensive list of liberal explanations.

Evidence for historicity. The details of the location, the other side, the tombs, the steep slope, and even the variant names, Gadara, Gerasa, and Gergesa, which, by the way, each occurs as a variant in each of the three passages, are of some interest. We talked about that a little bit, I think, in our Synoptic Gospels course, it was, and pointed out that Gadara and Gerasa are two of the large Decapolis cities, and the evidence now seems to suggest that the Decapolis cities shared various pieces, if you like, of the shore, the Sea of Galilee, for fishing rights and that sort of thing.

So, this may well have taken place on one of those. And Gerasa appears to be the name of a little village now called Cursi, up on the northern end, actually a little east of the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. The reaction of the people in sending Jesus away makes good sense as well.

If you were inventing a story, you'd probably have them all excited about this. But in fact, you've got them concerned probably because they lost some pigs, each one. But a person who could control the demons they are not about to start shouting and ask him to restore them, restore the pigs, since he might send the demons into them.

They don't know. So, the reaction of the pig herders running to get their story to the village first is very striking in that direction. Reaction of the eyewitnesses? Well, the pigs are eyewitnesses, and they stampede into the lake.

The pig herders flee, as I said, perhaps to get to town with their side of the story first. The demoniac is now normal. The others come to see what has happened.

And the eyewitnesses, the disciples, and others explain. The former demoniac, we see this in a parallel passage in Mark, wants to accompany Jesus. Old Testament background.

Similar miracles? Not much. More in pagan, rabbinic, and intertestamental literature. There's just not much about demons in the Old Testament.

There's some warrant from the Old Testament that demons lie behind much of pagan religion. And we may have had some kind of demonic oppression in

connection with the troubles that came upon Saul after God had replaced him, so to speak, with David, or had anointed David anyway. And probably there's a warrant for believing that the Egyptian magicians and others have some kind of demonic influence as well.

Os Guinness has a rather interesting remark in one of his books. I think it's *Dust of Death*, which he calls the campfire effect. That is that he's dealing with the question of the rise of interest in and examples of the demonic in Western culture since the 60s. And Guinness said it's something like what happens when you're out camping in a wilderness area where there's lots of wild game.

You build up a big fire and the animals stay away from it. So, you lay down and go to sleep, and then late at night, the fire has burnt down, and the wild animals begin to look out of the bushes and think about the possibility of getting some fresh meat or something of that sort. And Guinness says that's basically what happens in the West after the 60s is that Christianity, so to speak, has burnt down in many of these secularizing cultures, and now the occult is beginning to come out of the bushes and come back.

So that might be kind of what is going on here with the larger amount of demonic activity that appears that we see in rabbinic and intertestamental literature and particularly around the time of Jesus that the influence of paganism has had an effect on the Jewish situation and even that these are flocking to try and oppose what Jesus is going to do. We don't know how much they knew about that in advance, but Satan at least knows what's going on Earth, so surely would know something when the wise men show up and such, and you can see from the activities of Herod that indeed he did. One thing you do see in the Old Testament of similar miracles are the control of animals by God, Laban's sheep, how they bred, the plagues, the quail, Balaam's donkey, the cows pulling the ark, the ravens feeding Elijah, the bears beating on the punks who are after Elijah, and the lions in Daniel's den.

Control of animals by Satan, snake and garden, human animals, the Sabaeans and Chaldeans and Job, demonic influence, Saul for Samuel 16, the false prophets in 1 Kings 22-22 where a lying spirit comes from God's counsel to lure Ahab to his death at Ramoth Gilead. There's little on Satan in the Old Testament. 1 Chronicles 21-1, he incited David to take a census.

An interesting passage on causality. This is not the place to get into it. I do have a PowerPoint on causation that's also on our website.

A little ad for our website is here. It shows us that in one sense, God did it, in one sense, Satan did it; obviously, in one sense, David did it, and in another sense, David never went out and knocked on doors. His subordinates did it.

My take on that is the story of redemption in the human race is written by God. So everything that happens is at one level, God doing it. But all sorts of actors in the story, all but Jesus, in fact, are sinners after the fall of Adam and Eve, are all doing things, and in one very important sense, they're making decisions on the basis of their moral views and such, but in the other sense they're doing what God has written in the story, so I think we see that here as well.

Job 1-2, Satan slanders Job. Psalm 109:6 says, one of the psalms of judgment, if you like, let Satan stand at his right hand. Satan is going to bring disaster upon Judas; in fact, it appears to be the fulfillment of that passage.

Zechariah 3:1-2 Satan is accusing Jeshua, the high priest, at his right hand in the presence of God if you like. Possibly Genesis 6:1-2 the sons of God, daughters of men. A couple of us have leaned in the direction that we're looking at something supernatural there rather than merely intermarriage of the good guys with the bad guys or a pagan despot taking a harem or something of that sort. Various other suggestions have been made.

The closest thing here is Zechariah 3, where God delivers Joshua, Jeshua, the high priest from Satan, but it's not possession. Significance, immediate effect: two men are freed from Satan's power. The main one goes out to proclaim God's work.

That, by the way, is how I understand the relationship between the Matthew passage and the Mark and Luke passages. One of the demoniacs was more demonized than the spokesman, etc., and the other one was pretty much in the background. We have a number of these 1-2 type things that occur again and again through the Gospels, and we don't have time machines, but that's the way I would read them.

The Gadarenes are out 2,000 pigs, so they ask Jesus to leave. That's certainly part of the immediate effect. There's probably a deliverance judgment theme here.

A place in salvation history, the apparently growing activity of the demonic in the intertestamental period as far as the Jews are concerned doesn't mean that it's necessarily growing in the pagan circles. It may just be that some of the pagan level is creeping into Jewish circles here, perhaps due to mixing with Gentiles, possibly due to the approaching conflict with the coming Christ.

Direct confrontation with the powers of Satan we see here, and it's won decisively by Jesus. Does Jesus use the pigs to rid the area of demons? Possible. Or do the demons use the pigs to rid the area of Jesus? I can't tell for sure.

But Jesus comes back. We see that in the later passage, Mark and Matthew both believe. Jesus' power extends to the spiritual realm, not merely to nature and disease.

Symbolic elements given that Jesus' miracles often look forward to the end of the age, I suggest that here we see a foreshadowing of the defeat of Satan and the coming judgment. Note to remark to the demons in Matthew 8:29. What do you want with us, son of God? They shouted.

Have you come here to torture us? Before the appointed time. A little hint of the eschaton isn't yet, and they seem to know that and are unhappy that Jesus has shown up to throw them out. We turn then to another example of Jesus' power over the spiritual realm, and that's the daughter of Syrophenician in Matthew 15 Mark 7. We take this one from Mark 7:24 and following.

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house, did not want anyone to know it, and could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet.

The woman was a Greek born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. First, let the children eat all they want, he told her, for it's not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs.

Yes, Lord she replied, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. Then he told her for such a reply you may go. The demon has left your daughter.

She went home and found her child lying on the bed and the demon was gone. History of the event, an occasion during the latter part of Jesus' ministry, and his special time of working with his disciples. Matthew and Mark both put this incident in the midst of two others.

The Pharisaic opposition to the disciples not washing their hands and the feeding of the 4,000. Jesus has withdrawn to the northwest out of Galilee, presumably to avoid the crowds and his enemies. Mark 7. The pagan woman recognizes him and seeks the release of the demon-possessed daughter.

Liberal explanations are psychosomatic. They don't believe in demons anyway. Evidence for historicity well consistently joined to these other incidents.

The reference to the woman as a Canaanite in Matthew and a Greek or Syrophenician in Mark are consistent. The region of Tyre and Sidon region means not downtown but the territories controlled by them. The cryptic remarks of Jesus are, in fact, characteristic.

He often says things that his disciples don't understand, that his opponents don't understand, etc., and he does something of that sort here. Similar miracles besides the material on the demons that we mentioned earlier.

Miracles done for Gentiles or to Gentiles. There's the healing of Naaman and the rescue of the Zarephath widow and her son from starvation, followed by the resurrection of the son. There were miracles done to the Pharaoh, plagues, and such, as well as the death of the firstborn.

There are the miracles done to Nebuchadnezzar and giving him this coming to believe he's a wild animal and living like it for several years. Other materials, well, the separation between Jew and Gentile is a rather important Old Testament background, and that, in a sense, comes up here in this whole thing about Jesus really has been sent to the Jews, and here this Gentile woman is trying to get him to do a miracle for her but her response very impressive. We also see something in the Oriental view of dogs, which is not high, but that they still did have some pet dogs now, and there's an implication of that, particularly in the Matthew passage here.

Immediate effect. Remote exorcism of a demon without even a verbal command. Rather interesting.

Here's your Essene and Josephus with a special ring that's got the herbs in it, and he comes over and draws it out. It was a spectacular display, and we don't know how much was really occult and how much was chicanery, but here Jesus basically says the demon is gone, and the woman walks home and finds out that's the case. The child is delivered.

The faith of the woman in the face of obstacles. She doesn't give up easily, and that's a biblical thing: we should pray for the right things, but if we're pretty sure they're the right things, we should be persistent, and the woman shows that here. We get the theme of grace to the Gentiles, and though that's an emphasis of Luke here, it shows up in Matthew and Mark in this particular case that doesn't have a parallel of Luke.

Place in salvation history. A hint of the gospel to the Gentiles but some relationship to the Jews is here specified in this particular case. It fits perhaps to the Jews first and also to the Gentiles that Paul brings up a couple of times.

This is the most striking recorded exorcism, as we noted above, being remote and such and being for a Gentile woman and her child and such. Symbolic elements. The woman's parable regarding the dogs.

The dogs get to eat the crumbs under the table so the Gentiles should get to eat the crumbs from Jesus' miraculous ministry. Prediction of the gospel of the Gentiles I

think we see here by what we might call synecdoche apart from the whole. This woman gets Jesus' compassion and deliverance for her daughter and so that's a sample of what will be a very major thing after Jesus returns to heaven.

A third demonic situation is when Jesus delivers the possessed boy in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9. Here it looks like in Mark when they came to the other disciples, they had just come back from the transfiguration, and it's about a day later, so Jesus and the three that were with him saw a large crowd around the other disciples and the teacher's law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. What are you arguing with them about he asks.

A man in the crowd answered Teacher I brought you my son who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid.

I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit but they could not. Oh unbelieving generation Jesus replied. How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.

So, they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the boy's father how long he had been like this. From childhood he answered. It has often thrown him into the fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything take pity on us and help us.

If you can say Jesus, everything is possible for him who believes. Immediately the boy's father exclaimed. I do believe.

Help me overcome my unbelief. When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. You deaf and mute spirit he said.

I command you come out of him and never enter him again. The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said he's dead.

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet and he stood up. After Jesus had gone indoors his disciples asked him privately Why couldn't we drive him out? He replied This kind can only come out by prayer. Some manuscripts add and fasting.

The historicity of the events: what's the occasion? The event is linked with the transfiguration in all three gospels. The disciples left behind could not heal the boy. The scribes are apparently hassling them for this.

Liberal explanation: The boy is merely an epileptic. Some of the characteristics, in fact, are epileptic. You might very well say that demonic possession is able to bring about certain types of symptoms that the person may or may not have already been susceptible to.

Evidence of historicity Three accounts, all with some different details. Father's faith is a striking detail. Mark 9.24. I do believe.

Help me overcome my unbelief. Reaction of the eyewitnesses Only Luke records their astonishment. Similar miracles are noted above, but little is in the Old Testament demonic possession.

Saul's troubles are closest. 1 Samuel 16. Spirit interference with human action is also seen in the spirit of God stopping Saul.

1 Samuel 19 Immediate effect Demon gets in its last shot. Mark 9.26. The boy is healed. Possibly even resurrected.

Everybody is amazed. The disciples are puzzled about their inability. Placed in salvation history, even demonic forces are subject to Jesus.

Is the situation tougher for the disciples? I think the implication of Jesus' remarks is they don't really believe. That got us into a long discussion over 2,000 years of church history about how much faith you need and that sort of thing. Jesus already made some comments about that.

If you've got a little bit of faith, as much as a mustard seed, you can accomplish great things. This is not because faith is some power that you can use to do something, as you hear in a lot of the very strongly Pentecostal-type things here today, but it's who you've got faith in. If you're really trusting God, then God will do some spectacular things for you.

He's not turning over the running of the universe to you, so you should not expect that every prayer you have, every attempt to heal anybody is going to work necessarily, but he will do some spectacular things. So we really need to trust him. That, I think, is what we have here.

The faithless generation suggests probably, well, there's some complication here on how to translate generation. In English, generation normally means this time period, and it might mean that here because that's part of the meaning of the word. It could also mean a faithless race.



The Israelites have become rather unbelieving at this point, or it might even be the descendants of Adam. Just human sin, if you like, and the unbelief associated with this. So, that passage would be a little tricky to be quite sure of what Jesus is saying.

It mentions prayer, and possibly mentions fasting. So, prayer, trusting in Jesus, and trusting in the Father. We aren't given a narrative of what the disciples had been doing, so were they just trying to name it and claim it? It wasn't working, and they didn't pray as they should have. Don't know.

The end fasting does not show up in all the manuscripts, so we're not sure how hard to push on this, but obviously, God does do some things in response to the fasting of people, which means they're taking something very seriously, so it's possible that that would be included here as well. Symbolic elements. Is there an eschatological reference here to this particular situation? The idea that God is going to destroy the activity of the demonic, which he certainly will do at the end of the age.

Well, that's our discussion of these miracles over the spirit realm, and I want to close our whole discussion here with a little bit about the significance of Jesus' miracles. Old Testament background. Jesus' miracles are as impressive as any of the Old Testament miracles.

Only those of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha come close. Jesus' method of working miracles generally seems to be more direct than those of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. Moses has got the staff, he's got the hand, etc.

Jesus typically, in several cases, does something miraculous without even saying anything. Think, for instance, of the royal official who he sends home to his son and says to him to live, but he doesn't say, Lord, please call us to God to live or something like that. You've got that Elijah and Elisha lay down on these dead bodies and breathe into them, etc.

Jesus touches the widow of Nain's son. Not clear that he even touches Lazarus or Jairus' daughter, but he does speak to them, etc. In general, Jesus' methods of working miracles seem more direct than those of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha.

Elijah goes up onto the mountain and prays to God for the rain and sends off his servant and comes back and goes out again and comes back, etc. Jesus says shut up, be quiet, and the wind and the waves stop. Pretty impressive in that direction, I think.

We often see a connection with creation in connection with the miracles of Jesus, looking back at creation. We apparently have creation in connection with turning the water into wine, not changing the amount of stuff, but certainly changing the character of the stuff. C.S. Lewis points out in his book, *Miracles*, that what Jesus

does in turning the water into wine is what God does every year, but God does it providentially through a slow process that takes a whole season if you like, and Jesus does it in, who knows, a few seconds, a couple of minutes, something of that sort.

But we weren't there to see it happen. Multiplying loaves and fish, same sort of thing. Definitely an increase in the quantity of the material, though not there changing its nature, if you like.

Apparent recreation, healing the blind man with the use of clay, I suggested perhaps a recreation of his eyesight. We don't know exactly what was wrong with what form his blindness took. Compare Genesis 2:7, the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

And the word there, NIV, formed, is this yatsar, that cognate noun is potter, so molded, we might say, would be closer to it. Resurrections, apparent recreations in some sense, too. Connection with redemption or eschatology is a characteristic feature of Jesus' miracles.

Healing the blind, the lame, and the deaf as sketched in various eschatological passages. Pick one here, Isaiah 35:4. Say to those with fearful hearts, be strong, do not fear, your God will come.

He will come with vengeance, with divine retribution, he will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be open and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Resurrection is a main feature of the end times. Daniel 12:1, at that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise.

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time, your people, everyone whose name is found written in the book, will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. Resurrection is a main feature of the end times. Connection with creation and redemption.

It's been noticed that Jesus' miracles are real and striking, yet they are provisional. He only heals some people, not everyone. A couple of references there.

Most explicitly, he could not heal many in Nazareth because of their lack of faith. And then, by implication, the healing at the pool of Bethesda, where we're told a place crowded with people. And yet, only this one guy is healed.

He only raises some of the dead, not all. I've heard several pastors in preaching say that Lazarus came forth less when he said it. If he made it too general, everybody would come forth.

I guess, but there's some biblical warrant at least for the idea that he only raised some of the dead, not all. That's good. This is not an indication of Jesus' limitations but an indication of God's schedule.

This is already, but it's not yet. Jesus' miracles are a foretaste of what is to come. And when he returns, excuse me, a foretaste of what is to come when he returns.

Just as the Lord's Supper is only a foretaste of the Messianic banquet, Jesus claims to be able to forgive sins, and he supports this by a visible miracle. He shows himself to be the master of wind and weather, disease and death, fish and animals, and even supernatural spirit beings.

Though not a feature of these talks, he shows himself to know what is going to happen in the future. Well, that's our tour of the miraculous and the miracles of Jesus. There was certainly more that could be said about the miraculous.

I didn't do anything with the whole charismatic controversy of the 20th century but stuck to what we might call medieval up to a medieval period, something of that sort. Certainly, there was more that could be said about Jesus' miracles. We only looked at a selection of them and actually a part of that selection was done by doing ones that I hadn't already done PowerPoints on.

But I hope it gives you a feel for the importance of the miraculous in Christianity and the weakness of the arguments against the miraculous that we typically see in secular circles. Thank you very much and may the Lord bless you as you seek to know him. Well, there we are.

Thank you. Thank you for your time.