

Dr. Robert C. Newman, Miracles, Session 5, Jesus' Miracles Over the Natural Realm Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Newman, Miracles, Session 5, Jesus' Miracles Over the Natural Realm, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This text, a transcription of a lecture by Dr. Robert C. Newman, initiates a study on **Jesus' miracles**, specifically those demonstrating his power over the **natural realm**. The lecture series progresses from broader discussions of miracles in biblical and post-biblical contexts to a focused examination of **Jesus' authority** as evidenced in events like the miraculous catch of fish, the feeding of the five thousand, and the coin in the fish's mouth. For each miracle, Newman intends to explore the **supernatural power displayed**, the **eyewitness reactions**, and the **apparent significance**, drawing connections to the Old Testament and considering various interpretations, including skeptical views. The overall aim is to understand **Jesus' identity and mission** through the lens of these extraordinary acts.

2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Newman, Miracles, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → NT Introduction → Miracles).



**Newman_Miracles_
Session05.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Newman, Miracles, Session 5, Jesus' Miracles Over the Natural Realm

Briefing Document: Jesus' Miracles Over the Natural Realm

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented in Dr. Robert C. Newman's lecture on Jesus' miracles over the natural realm. This session, the fifth in a course titled "The Miraculous and the Miracles of Jesus," transitions from a broader discussion of miracles to a focused examination of Jesus' specific miraculous acts. Newman categorizes Jesus' miracles into three areas: the natural realm, the human realm, and the spirit realm. This document focuses specifically on the nature miracles discussed, analyzing their supernatural power, the reactions they evoked, and their apparent significance, particularly in understanding Jesus' person and work.

Key Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Definition and Categorization of Biblical Miracles:

- Newman reiterates his proposed definition of a biblical miracle as **"a striking or wonderful event displaying supernatural power and intended to carry a certain significance."**
- The lecture focuses on the first category of Jesus' miracles: **"miracles over the natural realm."** This category includes: the changing of water into wine, the miraculous catch of fish, stilling a storm, feeding the 5,000 (and 4,000), walking on water, and the coin in the fish's mouth.

1. The Miraculous Catch of Fish (Luke 5:1-11):

- **Narrative:** Jesus instructs experienced fishermen who had toiled all night without success to cast their nets again. They then catch an overwhelmingly large number of fish, causing their nets to break and requiring the assistance of another boat, which also becomes filled to the point of sinking.
- **Supernatural Power:** The sheer quantity of fish caught against all odds (after a fruitless night and during the day) demonstrates supernatural power over the natural world.
- **Reaction:** Simon Peter's reaction is profound: **"When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man."** This

highlights the recognition of Jesus' divine authority and Peter's own unworthiness. The disciples also "**left everything, and followed him.**"

- **Significance:**It reveals something about **Jesus' person**: He is more than just a teacher; he possesses divine power.
- It foreshadows **Jesus' work**: He tells Peter, "**From now on, you'll catch men.**" This provides a symbolic interpretation of the miracle as an analogy for the future success of the disciples in evangelism.
- It connects to the **Old Testament background**: The Old Testament establishes God's control over fish (Job 12:7-10, Genesis 1:28, Psalm 8:8). This miracle suggests Jesus is exercising a dominion that was originally given to humanity but seemingly lost after the fall (Genesis 9:2).
- **Liberal explanations** (allegory, Jesus seeing the fish) are addressed and countered with the implausibility of seeing a large number of fish from the shore of the boat due to the physics of light refraction in water.
- The detailed nature of the account (number of boats, details of fishing) suggests an "**eyewitness view of the matter.**"

1. **Feeding the 5,000 (John 6):**

- **Narrative:** Faced with a large crowd and no readily available food, Jesus miraculously multiplies five small barley loaves and two small fish to feed over 5,000 people, with twelve baskets of leftovers.
- **Supernatural Power:** The creation of a vast amount of food from meager provisions clearly demonstrates supernatural power over the natural resources. The abundance of leftovers further emphasizes the miraculous nature of the event.
- **Reaction:** The people, upon witnessing this, exclaimed, "**surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world.**" They recognized the messianic implications, possibly referencing Deuteronomy 18:15. They also intended to "**come and make him king by force.**"
- **Significance:**It highlights Jesus as the **prophet like Moses** who would provide for his people.
- It draws parallels with **Old Testament miracles**: The manna and quail in the wilderness, and the miraculous provisions by Elijah and Elisha. However, Newman

emphasizes that "**Jesus' connection with the miracle is much more direct than Moses.**" Jesus himself takes the food, gives thanks, and distributes it.

- **Liberal explanations** (lesson in sharing, invented story) are discussed and countered by the consistency of the account across all four Gospels and the unusual detail of the leftovers.
- **Symbolic elements** are significant, as Jesus himself interprets the miracle in the subsequent discourse (John 6:22-71), declaring, "**I'm the bread of life, and it wasn't Moses that fed you with man in the wilderness was God...**" He connects this miracle with the giving of his own life as spiritual sustenance, foreshadowing the **Lord's Supper**.

1. **The Coin in the Fish's Mouth (Matthew 17:24-27):**

- **Narrative:** When tax collectors question Peter about Jesus paying the temple tax, Jesus instructs Peter to catch the first fish he hooks, in whose mouth he will find a four-drachma coin – enough for both Jesus' and Peter's tax.
- **Supernatural Power:** This miracle displays Jesus' pre-knowledge and his ability to influence the natural world, specifically the movement and presence of a specific coin in a specific fish.
- **Reaction:** The text does not explicitly mention the reaction of eyewitnesses beyond Peter's compliance.
- **Significance:** It underscores Jesus' unique **sonship** and, by extension, hints at Peter's inclusion in that relationship ("**Then the sons are exempt, Jesus said to him. But so that we may not offend them...give it to them for my tax and yours.**").
- It touches upon the **relation of the Christian to the law**. While Jesus, as the Son, might be exempt from the temple tax (which was for atonement), he chooses to pay it to avoid offense.
- It connects to the **Old Testament context** of the half-shekel tax as an offering for the atonement of souls (Exodus 30:13-16). Jesus, who doesn't need atonement, still provides for the tax, highlighting his unique position.
- The miracle again demonstrates Jesus' **control over the fish**, linking back to the themes of dominion.

Conclusion:

Dr. Newman's analysis of Jesus' miracles over the natural realm emphasizes their significance beyond mere displays of power. These miracles serve to reveal Jesus' identity, foreshadow his work, and connect with the Old Testament narrative in ways that would have resonated with his original audience. They demonstrate Jesus' authority over creation, his compassion for the needs of people, and hint at the deeper spiritual realities he came to establish. The discussion also addresses and critiques liberal interpretations, arguing for the historical reality and profound meaning of these supernatural events.

4. Study Guide: Newman, Miracles, Session 5, Jesus' Miracles Over the Natural Realm

Study Guide: Jesus' Miracles Over the Natural Realm

Key Concepts:

- **Biblical Miracle:** A striking or wonderful event displaying supernatural power and intended to carry a certain significance.
- **Miracles Over the Natural Realm:** Demonstrations of Jesus' power and authority over the physical world.
- **Historicity:** The question of whether the events described in the Gospels actually occurred in history.
- **Liberal Explanations:** Non-supernatural interpretations of the miracle accounts, often focusing on allegory, natural phenomena, or invented stories.
- **Old Testament Background:** Understanding how Jesus' miracles relate to and draw upon events and themes in the Old Testament.
- **Symbolic Significance:** The deeper meaning or message conveyed by the miracle beyond the immediate event.
- **Salvation History:** How individual events in the Bible fit into God's overall plan of redemption.
- **Jesus' Person and Work:** How the miracles reveal aspects of Jesus' identity and his mission.

Quiz:

1. Define a biblical miracle according to Dr. Newman's lecture.
2. List three categories under which Jesus' miracles are classified in the lecture.
3. Describe the circumstances surrounding the miraculous catch of fish in Luke 5. What was Peter's reaction to this event?
4. What are two liberal explanations offered for the feeding of the 5,000?
5. Explain how the feeding of the 5,000 relates to the Old Testament narrative of the manna in the wilderness.

6. What is a key piece of evidence cited for the historicity of the feeding of the 5,000, noting the variety in the Gospel accounts?
7. Summarize the situation that led to the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth in Matthew 17.
8. What does Jesus' response regarding the temple tax imply about his identity, according to the lecture?
9. How does the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth connect with the Old Testament practice of the half-shekel tax?
10. What symbolic significance does Jesus himself give to the miraculous catch of fish?

Answer Key:

1. A biblical miracle is a striking or wonderful event that demonstrates supernatural power and is intended to communicate a specific significance or message. These events are not merely random occurrences but point to God's intervention in the world.
2. The three categories under which Jesus' miracles are classified in the lecture are miracles over the natural realm, miracles over the human realm, and miracles over the spirit realm. These divisions help to organize and understand the different ways Jesus displayed his authority.
3. The miraculous catch of fish occurred after Jesus had been teaching by the Sea of Galilee. The disciples, having fished all night without success, were instructed by Jesus to cast their nets again, resulting in an overwhelmingly large catch that began to break their nets and fill two boats. Peter's reaction was one of astonishment and a recognition of his own sinfulness in the presence of such divine power, leading him to say, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"
4. Two liberal explanations for the feeding of the 5,000 are that it was a lesson in sharing, where people were initially hesitant to reveal their hidden food until a boy shared his, prompting others to do the same. Another explanation suggests it was an invented story created to draw parallels between Jesus' actions and the miracle stories of the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha.
5. The feeding of the 5,000 is comparable to the Old Testament narrative of the manna in the wilderness because both events involve the miraculous provision of food for a large multitude in a desolate place. This connection highlights Jesus as

someone who can provide for his people in a way reminiscent of God's provision for the Israelites during their exodus.

6. A key piece of evidence for the historicity of the feeding of the 5,000 is that all four Gospels record the event, and they do so with considerable variety in their accounts. This suggests independent eyewitness testimonies or traditions rather than mere copying from a single source, lending credibility to the event's occurrence.
7. The miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth took place in Capernaum after Jesus and his disciples returned from a preaching tour. Tax collectors questioned Peter about whether Jesus paid the temple tax. Before Peter could even bring up the matter, Jesus already knew and instructed Peter to catch a fish, in whose mouth he would find a coin sufficient to pay the tax for both of them.
8. Jesus' response regarding the temple tax, where he implies that as the Son of God he is exempt but pays it anyway to avoid offense, indicates his unique relationship with the Father and his divine sonship. Furthermore, by including Peter in the provision, it hints at Peter's own privileged status as a follower of Jesus.
9. The miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth connects with the Old Testament practice of the half-shekel (or two-drachma) tax described in Exodus 30, which was required of every adult Israelite as an offering to the Lord for the atonement of their lives (or souls). This background illuminates the significance of Jesus paying this specific tax.
10. Jesus himself gives a symbolic significance to the miraculous catch of fish by stating to Simon Peter, "From now on, you will catch men." This indicates that the miraculous catch was not just a display of power over nature but also a foreshadowing and encouragement for the disciples' future ministry of evangelism, where they would gather people into the kingdom of God.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the role of Old Testament parallels in understanding the significance of Jesus' miracles over the natural realm, using specific examples from the lecture.
2. Compare and contrast the liberal and traditional interpretations of one of Jesus' nature miracles discussed in the lecture. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective.
3. Discuss how Jesus' miracles over the natural realm reveal his authority and identity, connecting these miracles to the concept of Jesus as the "second Adam."
4. Examine the different reactions of the eyewitnesses (or lack thereof) to Jesus' nature miracles, and discuss what these reactions reveal about the impact and interpretation of these events.
5. Evaluate the evidence for the historicity of Jesus' miracles over the natural realm, considering both the biblical accounts and the challenges raised by skeptical viewpoints.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Allegory:** A story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.
- **Apocrypha:** Biblical or related writings not forming part of the accepted canon of Scripture.
- **Atonement:** The reconciliation of God and humankind through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.
- **Eschatological:** Relating to the end times or the final events in the history of the world.
- **Gentiles:** Persons who are not of Jewish origin or faith.
- **Historicity:** The historical accuracy of a person or event.
- **IBRI Website:** Likely refers to the website of the Institute for Biblical Research, where additional materials related to the lecture series might be found.
- **Liberal Theology:** A theological approach that emphasizes reason and experience over traditional doctrines and often adopts more critical views of biblical accounts, including miracles.
- **Messiah:** The promised deliverer of the Jewish nation prophesied in the Hebrew Bible.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God to humankind.
- **Trinitarian:** Relating to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that God is one being in three persons: Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit.
- **Septuagint:** The earliest extant Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures from the original Hebrew.

5. FAQs on Newman, Miracles, Session 5, Jesus' Miracles Over the Natural Realm, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Jesus' Miracles Over the Natural Realm

1. How does Dr. Newman define a biblical miracle in the context of Jesus' ministry? Dr. Newman defines a biblical miracle as a striking or wonderful event that displays supernatural power and is intended to carry a certain significance. In the context of Jesus' ministry, these miracles are categorized into three areas: miracles over the natural realm, miracles over the human realm, and miracles over the spirit realm. Each miracle reveals something about Jesus' person and work by demonstrating his supernatural power, the reactions it evokes, and its apparent significance.

2. What are some examples of Jesus' miracles over the natural realm discussed in the source? The source specifically mentions the following miracles of Jesus over the natural realm: the changing of water into wine, the miraculous catch of fish, stilling a storm, feeding the 5,000, feeding the 4,000, walking on water, and the coin in the fish's mouth. The lecture focuses in detail on the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11), the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6), and the coin in the fish's mouth (Matthew 17:24-27).

3. What is the significance of the miraculous catch of fish, and how does Dr. Newman address alternative explanations for this event? The miraculous catch of fish demonstrated Jesus' supernatural power and led Peter to recognize his own sinfulness in contrast to Jesus' divine nature. It also resulted in the disciples leaving everything to follow Jesus, recognizing him as more than just a clever individual. Jesus himself interpreted the event symbolically, suggesting that his disciples would become "fishers of men," gathering people into the kingdom. Dr. Newman addresses liberal explanations, such as it being merely an allegory or Jesus simply seeing the fish, by pointing out the implausibility of the latter due to the physics of seeing fish underwater from a boat.

4. How does the feeding of the 5,000 connect to the Old Testament and what is its symbolic importance according to the source? The feeding of the 5,000 has several Old Testament parallels, including the provision of manna and quail in the wilderness during Moses' time, as well as miracles performed by Elijah and Elisha. These connections suggest that Jesus' miracles called the people's attention to God's previous acts in salvation history. Symbolically, the feeding of the 5,000 foreshadows Jesus as the "bread of life" and is connected to the Lord's Supper, representing his body broken for humanity. The event also led the people to recognize Jesus as "the prophet who is to come," as prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15.

5. What are some of the unique details about the feeding of the 5,000 that argue for its historicity, according to Dr. Newman? Dr. Newman highlights several details that support the historicity of the feeding of the 5,000: it is recorded in all four Gospels with considerable variety, suggesting independent accounts; specific details about the location (Bethsaida and Julias) and even the presence of green grass (a rare spring phenomenon in Israel) are mentioned; the reference to the *kophinoi* (standard Jewish food baskets) for collecting leftovers is noted; and the fact that Jesus had leftovers gathered up contrasts with typical apocryphal miracle stories, suggesting an authenticity rooted in Jesus' practical approach and not taking miracles for granted.

6. What was the occasion and significance of the miracle of the coin in the fish's mouth? The occasion for the coin in the fish's mouth was the collection of the two-drachma temple tax in Capernaum. When Peter affirmed that Jesus would pay it, Jesus, anticipating Peter's question, performed a miracle by instructing Peter to catch a fish that would have a four-drachma coin in its mouth, enough to pay the tax for both Jesus and Peter. The significance lies in Jesus' assertion of his sonship (implying exemption from the tax) while still choosing to pay it so as not to offend. It also hints at Peter's sonship in relation to God. Symbolically, the half-shekel tax was associated with atonement (Exodus 30:13-16), and this miracle touches on the relationship of Christians to the law, suggesting that while Jesus is not obligated, he fulfills it and brings others into a new relationship.

7. How do Jesus' miracles over nature relate to the Old Testament concept of human dominion over creation? The Old Testament in Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 8:8 states that humans were made to rule over the fish and other creatures. However, after the Fall (Genesis 3:2), the fish fear and flee humans. Dr. Newman suggests that Jesus' ability to command nature, as seen in the miraculous catch of fish, demonstrates a restoration of this lost dominion. As the second Adam, Jesus comes to reverse the effects of the Fall, including humanity's diminished relationship with the natural world. His control over the fish signifies a reclaiming of the authority originally given to humankind.

8. What does Dr. Newman emphasize as a key aspect of understanding Jesus' miracles, particularly in relation to their audience? Dr. Newman emphasizes the importance of understanding the Old Testament background when interpreting Jesus' miracles. The original audience, including Jesus' disciples and those who witnessed the events, would have been deeply familiar with the stories of God's power and interventions in the Old Testament. Therefore, recognizing these parallels and allusions is crucial for grasping the significance of Jesus' miracles and what they communicated about his identity and mission within the context of salvation history that his contemporaries would have understood.