

# Asking Our Hard Questions of the Bible

October 24, 2005

## Seeing the Kingdom of God and Jesus Way of Teaching and Ministry II

- I. Introduction
  - A. Announcements
    1. Open with prayer
    2. Any new people? If so, summarize need to bring paper, pen, and Bible (various versions OK for comparison, but NRSV will be main one for reading, NASB for studying).
    3. Get list of names and how to contact (email preferred)
    4. 90 minutes on 4th Mondays at 7 p.m.
    5. Read passages (volunteers)
  - B. Does anyone have any questions for us to consider for next time?
  - C. Tonight we are going to cover two topics.
    1. First we will consider a question that Janet raised about Jesus telling some that they would see the Kingdom of God before their death.
    2. Then we will follow up on our discussion from last time about Jesus' methods of ministry and teaching. This time we will talk about the meaning of the miracles.
  
- II. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke each record Jesus' startling statement to the disciples and the crowds that some of them would see the Kingdom of God before they died. (Matthew 16:24-28, Mark 8:34-9:1, Luke 9:23-27)
  - A. What did Jesus mean? Who saw the Kingdom and when?
  - B. First let's compare the key verses in each of the gospels.
    1. Read Mt. 16:28, Mk 9:1, Lk 9:27
    2. What similarities/differences?
    3. Mk 9:1 gives us a little more information (with power), so let's focus on the Mk passage and on its context. **Read Mk 8:31-9:1**
  - C. What was Jesus talking about here just before our key verse in 9:1?
    1. His death and resurrection (31-32) Follows Peter's statement the Jesus is the Messiah.
    2. Rebuked Peter for seeing things from a human perspective rather than God's perspective (33)
    3. That his followers must be prepared to give up own lives, too (34-35)
      - a. Pick up cross=face own death as he soon would
      - b. Must risk life to gain life.
    4. The perspective of God focuses on salvation of the soul (35-37)

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5. Notice, too, the long-term view Jesus urges in v. 38. When does the payoff come for “picking up our crosses?”
    - a. What happens to us at that time? (general resurrection)
    - b. Let’s read two passages that make that clear. Then we will come right back to Mark. **See John 5:25-29 and 1<sup>st</sup> Th 4:15-17.**
  6. Do you see the connection between what happens to Jesus (31-32) and what happens to those of us who are his followers (35 & 38)? What is Jesus talking about in each case? (Death and Resurrection)
- D. Let’s look further at the context by examining what comes *after* our key verse.
1. **Read Mark 9:2-8**
  2. Do you see any possible connections between this event and what Jesus had said in 9:1?
    - a. Kingdom of God - vision of heaven?
    - b. This turns focus to God’s perspective, though Peter (and other disciples) still seemed confused. Building tabernacles for each showed a lack of full understanding of who Jesus is.
  3. Are there any ways in which this event does NOT fulfill what Jesus had said in 9:1?
    - a. Odd that Jesus would say the people wouldn’t die before seeing something that was only a week away.
    - b. There is a vision, but not a real demonstration of power.
  4. What could Jesus have meant by the Kingdom of God coming “with power?”
    - a. Remember our examination of the context before 9:1 - was there something in there that showed God’s power? (Resurrection)
    - b. So, Jesus was talking about the Kingdom of God and power of his own resurrection!
  5. The transfiguration was a hint of things to come; it was not the full revelation. Jesus had said that suffering and death must come first?
    - a. The transfiguration, then, was in some ways another object lesson for the disciples.
    - b. The heavenly vision would be accomplished, but first they had to go down the mountain where Jesus showed them another little bit of his power.
    - c. Notice what the people thought about the boy’s condition (26). So in a figurative sense Jesus raised the boy from the dead! It’s not exactly the same, but the issue of death and resurrection is brought up again.
    - d. And then Jesus told the disciples again of his own death and resurrection (v.31)

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- E. After considering this whole section, then, what did Jesus mean when he said “There are some standing here who not taste death until they see that the Kingdom of God has come with power?”
  - 1. Any questions/comments?
  
- III. Last time we examined 3 of Jesus’ methods of teaching and ministry: the telling of parables, preaching of sermons, and creating moments of decision.
  - A. Review
    - 1. We talked about spoken parables and acted-out parables and how they were designed to draw us into the story; to reach different people in different ways, but carry one central message.
    - 2. We then looked at an often overlooked aspect of Jesus’ sermons. (Anyone remember what that was?)
      - a. Hint: “Woe to you . . .”
      - b. We found that besides including parables and instruction, he preached sermons of judgement for those who rejected God by rejecting Jesus and his message.
    - 3. Thirdly we briefly talked about two primary ways Jesus created moments for decision.
      - a. There is the sort of Socratic method of asking penetrating questions, and
      - b. Making statements---sometimes challenging ones---that forced a response.
    - 4. I found it interesting that in our sermon passage 2 Sundays ago, Jesus used both with the rich young man. Just to review this, let’s turn to **Mark 10:17-21** and identify both of those methods in Jesus’ conversation with him.
      - a. Why do you call me good? (Penetrating question)
      - b. One thing you lack - sell all your goods and give to the poor, then follow me. (Challenging statement)
  - B. This time we will take a closer look at how Jesus used miracles in his teaching and ministry.
    - 1. In order to do that properly, we’ll first define “miracle,” then look at when and why they occurred in other places in the Bible, and finally be able to compare that to the when and why of Jesus’ use of miracles.
  - C. (My definition) A miracle is an event that changes something or someone in a physical way by a power and means that we cannot explain or understand by any natural process in the material world. (A vision may be supernatural and miraculous in that sense, but will not be considered a miracle for our study.)

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- D. The Bible records many miracles, but contrary to popular belief, they are not found everywhere throughout the Bible.
1. Biblical miracles are, in fact, largely clustered in 3 specific time periods.
  2. In each of these times, there was a major event or crisis.
    - a. Moses-Joshua era (Exodus and enter Promised Land)
    - b. Elijah-Elisha era (Apostasy under King Ahab - Baal worship)
    - c. Jesus-Apostles era (Revelation of the Messiah to the world)
- E. I have made some handouts for you that list the miracles of each of those times.
1. There are many different ways people have categorized the different types of miracles.
  2. I've simplified it into 3 basic categories
    - a. Miracles of Judgement (i.e., *against* something/someone)
    - b. Miracles over Nature (Signs)
    - c. Miracles of Healing/Cleansing (i.e., *for* something/someone)
  3. Let's compare the lists.
    - a. What do you notice about the types of miracles in each era?
    - b. What does that tell us about the purpose of each ministry and what was needed at the time?
    - c. Seeing the whole list is especially revealing of Jesus' purpose.  
**Read John 3:17**
  4. On each list there are a few Miracles Over Nature (Signs) marked with a # sign.
    - a. What do they have in common from one era to another?
    - b. What are they signs of? {God's presence}
    - c. How does what Jesus did compare with those before him?
- F. Let's look at one in particular. The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle, besides Jesus' resurrection, included in all 4 gospels. There is a very strong reason for this.
1. **Read Deut. 18:15-18, Deut. 34:7-12**
  2. **Read John 6:12-15**
  3. What had the people concluded about Jesus?
  4. What can we conclude about Jesus from this miracle and our knowledge of the O.T.? Who do the signs tell us Jesus is? (Jesus is the one promised who is greater than Moses--the Messiah)
  5. We can even go further. I have called these signs Miracles Over Nature, but could just as easily call them Miracles Over God's Creation.
    - a. If someone can control Creation (walk on water, part rivers)
    - b. And create bread and oil out of thin air.
    - c. What does that imply about who that person could be?

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- G. The signs tell us something about who Jesus is, but the other miracles tell us what he came to do.
1. I have put a letter in **bold type** after each of Jesus' healing miracles to indicate what the main intent or result of the particular miracle was.
    - a. **A** Increases faith
    - b. **B** Demonstrates Jesus' spiritual authority
    - c. **C** Response to faith
    - d. **D** Simple compassion
    - e. **E** Sabbath healing
    - f. **F** Foreigner (i.e., Jesus was not just for the Jews)
  2. These are all sub-themes in his healing ministry.
    - a. Sometimes he did them in public, sometimes semi-privately.
    - b. Sometimes he was well received, sometimes he was criticized or condemned.
    - c. Each individual miracle had a particular purpose, but all of them together show a pattern of a larger theme and purpose.
- H. You know how the typical question at a beauty pageant is usually something like, "If you could have just one wish come true, what would it be?"
1. The answer has become a cliché: "I'd wish for world peace. I'd wish that everybody would just love everybody else."
  2. Why didn't Jesus do that?
    - a. He could have used his miracles to end war, but he didn't
    - b. He could have used his miracles to end poverty, but he didn't.
    - c. He could have used his miracles to save the rainforest, to prevent hurricanes and earthquakes, even to get my Chicago Cubs into the world series, but he didn't do any of those things. Why not?
  3. Instead, what are most of his miracles about?
  4. Why did he heal? (Compassion, e.g.)
- I. There is something more, if we look deeper. Just as parables were about more than the stories they told, Jesus' miracles were about more than making people well.
1. Again it is important to know the O.T. in order to fully understand the N.T.
    - a. Read: **Lev. 13:45-46** (leprosy),
    - b. **Lev. 15:19-21, 25** (bleeding);
    - c. **Lev. 21:16-23** (blind, disabled, etc.)
  2. Now compare the list of the people who were excluded to the list of healing miracles Jesus performed. What do you notice?
  3. Why were they excluded? Why would someone who was sick or disabled be *persona non grata* at the temple/tabernacle?

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- a. Think of their lives as living parables. Just as the physical tabernacle represented a spiritual reality (heaven/Kingdom of God), their physical bodies signified a spiritual condition.
  - b. i.e., figuratively speaking, their physical imperfection represented a spiritual imperfection, that is, sin.
4. So when Jesus healed them physically, what other meaning did the healing have?
  5. See healing of the paralyzed man **Mark 2:5-11**
- J. Jesus will come again, and the miracles then will be very different.
1. Along with the miracles of ultimate salvation, there will also be miracles of judgement.
  2. But Jesus came the first time with a very particular mission: to save us from our sins.
  3. His miracles were intended to show us who he is and why he came.
  4. His Miracles of Nature were signs to show us God in the flesh.
  5. And his Miracles of Healing were to demonstrate that he had come to forgive sins and make us whole and clean in the sight of God.

## IV. Summary

- A. Our goal today was to consider what Jesus meant by telling some they would see the Kingdom of God in their lifetime and to examine Jesus use of miracles in his teaching and ministry.
  1. Have we done that satisfactorily?
  2. Have these studies been helpful?
- B. How does what we have studied apply to each of us?
- C. What questions for next time?
- D. Any comments on our format or subject matter so far?
- E. Next meeting: Monday Nov. 28th, 7-8:30 p. m.
- F. Close in prayer
- G. **Archives of class notes can be found online at:**  
[www.fumcwa.org/classes/wdbsa](http://www.fumcwa.org/classes/wdbsa)