

# Faith -N- Focus

*Adult Bible Studies*

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**“Messiah’s Miracles, Part Two”**

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# **“Messiah’s Miracles, Part Two”**

## **Monthly Summary**

In this month, we continue our study of Messiah’s Miracles, looking at various wonders performed by Jesus during his earthly ministry. Specifically, we are looking at the non-healing miracles. One of the qualifying aspects of miracles is they are supernatural, going beyond human limits. They are of God, not of man. When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, he confessed, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (Jn. 3:2). A second qualifying aspect of miracles is they are uncommon – as opposed to routine, everyday occurrences. If miracles happened all the time, throughout our lives, then they would just be a normal part of our experience. We then would no longer consider them miraculous. The magnitude of Jesus’ miracles was an identifying mark that he was the Christ, the Son of God. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another,” Jesus replied, “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Mt. 11:3, 5). In other words, Jesus uniquely met all of the requirements for being the Christ, the Son of God; and miracles were an essential part of this.

Certainly, we are not Christ; but we are his representatives in the world today. We should expect to carry on his ministry as his ambassadors. In fact, the New Testament church was characterized by miracles and wonders recorded in the book of Acts. In these last days, as we look for Christ’s coming, we should continue to expect miracles in the church – for Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works that these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (Jn. 14:12-14). We need miracles today; they serve to glorify Christ and magnify his Word.

## February 4, 2018

### “Loaves and Fishes”

#### Main Point

God will miraculously supply all we need in order to fulfill his mission throughout the world.

#### Introduction

Jesus and his twelve apostles attempted to retreat from the crowds. Why? The apostles had finished an extensive mission campaign. Moreover, John the Baptist, the great prophet, had just been beheaded. Furthermore, because of the crowds, the disciples had little time to rest and eat. Jesus knew they needed a break. So they took a ship to a more remote area near Bethsaida. However, when the people saw him leaving, they followed, and were even waiting on him when he arrived. Of course, Jesus did not turn them away. How could he possibly turn away people who followed him so intently? Having compassion on them, he taught them about the kingdom of God and healed their sick. At evening, the disciples asked Jesus to dismiss the multitude because the people needed to find food and lodging (Mt. 14:10-15; Mk. 6:12-13, 27-36; Lu. 9:1-6, 10-12). Then Jesus said something completely unexpected: “They need not depart; give ye them to eat” (Mt. 14:16).

#### Key Verse

“And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full” (Mt. 14:20).

#### Lesson Summary

In Mark 6:35-44, we read the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Rather than sending the multitude away empty, Jesus told his disciples to feed the hungry multitude. But how could they obtain enough food to feed this huge crowd? The only food available was a young boy’s supper: “five barley loaves and two small fishes” (Jn. 6:7-9). How can twelve men ever feed over five thousand people with only a few loaves and fishes? Undoubtedly, it’s humanly impossible. But they did it! This very point – the impossibility of it all – is primary to our understanding the lesson in the miracle. Supernaturally, they actually fed the multitude until they were all full; and they even had twelve baskets remaining. What does this miracle teach us? The twelve apostles had returned from their missionary travels, going village to village, preaching the gospel, casting out devils, and healing the sick (Lu. 9:1-2, 6; Mk. 6:7, 12-13). The twelve came back telling Jesus all they had done and taught (Mk. 6:30). They were tired and weary, yet they had only

begun to fulfill Christ's mission (v. 31). Indeed, the worldwide mission of the church is truly a daunting task. For Zion Assembly to reach the masses – literally billions – with the doctrine of Christ is humanly impossible. But it's not impossible with God (Lu. 1:37; 18:27). Humanly speaking, we will never have enough laborers and resources to meet the demands of our mission. Our mission outreach will always require greater funding; we will always need more pastors and ministers to establish churches; we will never have a surplus of qualified leaders; and church buildings with adequate facilities will always be in short supply. In brief, we will never have more resources than our mission requires. But we simply cannot sit around waiting on enough before we fulfill our obligation. Instead, we must see our mission from a spiritual point of view, exercising faith in the supernatural power of God, because the mission of the church will be completed before the coming of the Lord (Mt. 24:14). Although we may have little to offer in comparison to the need, Jesus still says the same thing to the church today: "You feed them." We should therefore have confidence that God will supply all we need as we need it. The apostles did not have 200 pennyworth of bread to feed the vast multitude. Nevertheless, when the time came for the crowd to be fed, Jesus multiplied the disciples' meager resources right between their fingertips. Certainly, we do not have enough resources to reach the world. But when we give all we have to Jesus, no matter how little it may seem, he can bless it and then use us to reach the world for him. Indeed, the Lord has much abundance for his church. We will never run short of God's grace and power when we depend on Christ's boundless supply. "And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men" (Mk. 6:43-44). After the disciples fed the great multitude and satisfied the hunger of the people, the disciples then took up twelve baskets of bread and fish – enough food for each apostle to have his own basket (Ph. 4:19).

### **Scripture Study**

Feeding the five thousand – Mk. 6:35-44; Mt. 14:15-21; Lu. 9:12-17

Fulfilling our mission – Lu. 9:1-2, 6; Mk. 6:7, 12-13, 30-31; Mt. 24:14

### **Conclusion**

Jesus fed the crowd of hungry people; but his message to us is so much greater than filling their empty bellies with food. Like Jesus, our compassion for multitudes of lost people encourages our responsibility to feed their hungry souls with the inexhaustible bread of life.

# February 11, 2018

## “Walking on Water”

### Main Point

We should have confidence in the One who walks on water. He has already triumphed over every opposition we will face in this life.

### Introduction

In Matthew 8:23-27, the disciples were in a raging storm and their lives were in jeopardy; but Jesus was on the ship sound asleep. They felt like they were going to perish in the storm. On the contrary, as long as Jesus was with them, they were secure. That night, the disciples learned a great lesson about having faith in Jesus. Once again, in Matthew 14:22-33, they struggled on another voyage across the sea. This time, however, Jesus wasn't on the boat with them, but he was walking on water. Let's consider the story.

### Key Verse

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea” (Mt. 14:25).

### Lesson Summary

At evening, Jesus sent his disciples ahead of him to the other side of the sea, and he stayed behind to disperse the multitude (consider Mt. 14:22-23; Jn. 6:14-15). During the night, Jesus was alone praying in the mountain while the disciples were crossing the sea, fighting the winds and waves (Mt. 14:24). Although he was not on the ship with them, he was fully aware of their adversity. “About the fourth watch of the night” (i.e. around 3 o'clock in the morning), Jesus came near the ship walking on water (Mk. 6:48). According to John, they had already toiled for 25 or 30 furlongs, which is approximately 3 or 4 miles (Jn. 6:19). He initially intended to pass by them until they saw him and thought he was a spirit (Mk. 6:49). Had they not seen him, would Jesus have allowed them to continue in the struggle? Certainly, following Christ does not eliminate all adversity. Christian faith offers no guarantee for a problem-free life. On the contrary, facing opposition in our Christian walk serves an important purpose. Rather than undermining true faith in Christ, hardships actually cause us to persevere and overcome by faith. We grow spiritually stronger through perseverance and patience (2 Co. 12:9-10; Ja. 1:3-4). When the disciples saw what they thought was a spirit walking on the sea, they were afraid and cried out. Jesus then spoke to

them, saying, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” (Mt. 14:27). Peter boldly asked to go unto Jesus walking upon the water; and Jesus said, “Come” (vv. 28-29). Peter miraculously walked on water toward Jesus, but then he began to sink when fear gripped his heart (v. 30). Fear works against faith; it is the opposite of faith and trust in God. Faith focuses on God’s ability while fear focuses on man’s limitations and circumstances. Faith says, “God can!” Fear says, “I can’t.” Jesus said to Peter, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (v. 31). At first, his faith in Christ was strong – strong enough to walk on water – but then the fear of the boisterous sea overtook his faith. Peter allowed the appearance of things to intimidate him and shake his confidence in the power of Christ. How often has fear hindered us from receiving from the Lord? How many times has fear stopped us from doing great exploits for God? Paul admonished Timothy to be bold in his faith, saying, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Ti. 1:7-8). After Jesus came into the ship, everything changed. The strong winds stopped blowing and all became peaceful (Mt. 14:32). John explained that they immediately arrived at their destination (Jn. 6:21). Suddenly, their toil and fear were behind them. What was the outcome of this miraculous event? Matthew explained, “Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Mt. 14:33). The One who walks on water and calms the raging sea is the Son of God. In following the Lord, we will surely face many winds of opposition; but the Son of God always sees our struggles, and his presence ultimately has the calming effect we desire in our lives.

### **Scripture Study**

Adversity – Mt. 14:22-26; Mk. 6:45-49; Jn. 6:16-19

Faith – Mt. 14:27-31; Mk. 6:50; Jn. 6:20

Peace – Mt. 14:32-33; Mk. 6:51; Jn. 6:21

### **Conclusion**

For the child of God, we should take great courage in knowing the Lord is always working in our lives, even through our adversity and trials. We struggle against the winds and waves, but the Lord walks upon the water. He is triumphant over every opposition. Indeed, he has everything under control. So we need to trust him and place our faith firmly in Jesus.

## February 18, 2018

### “Christ’s Transfiguration”

#### Main Point

Through the transfiguration, we catch a glimpse of the glory and power of God’s kingdom available to the church today.

#### Introduction

For thousands of years, mankind has participated in the routine called “life.” Each day, all around the globe, people busily come and go in every direction, twenty-four hours a day, and seven days a week. As we go through life, the perceptions of our natural senses, for the most part, form the substance of human reality. However, before the existence of the natural world, God dwelled in eternity (Is. 57:15). Genesis 1:1 declares, “In the beginning God.” John 1:1 declares, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” because he is the Creator of heaven and earth (Col. 1:16-17). Therefore, transcending all we see, hear, and sense with our natural abilities remains the invisible God. Over two thousand years ago, this same eternal Word was made human flesh. He became one of us. In terms of the natural, he made his appearance as a man, one sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Ro. 8:3). But there was so much more to Jesus Christ than a mere mortal; for he was, and is indeed, the Son of God full of glory and power.

#### Key Verse

“And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them” (Mk. 9:2).

#### Lesson Summary

In Mark 9:1, Jesus promised that some of his disciples would witness something far beyond this world (c.f. Mt. 16:28; Lu. 9:27). They would receive a foretaste of Christ in the power and glory of his kingdom. Six days later, Jesus was alone with Peter, James, and John on a high mountain when he was miraculously transfigured before them (Mk. 9:2-3; 17:1-2; Lu. 9:28-29). In other words, Jesus was temporarily changed; he went through a momentary metamorphosis. In the opening of his gospel, John declared, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, **(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)** full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:14). Perhaps, he was reflecting

on supernatural experiences like the transfiguration when he wrote these words. On the mount, the three disciples actually witnessed God's spiritual realm breaking forth into their natural sphere. This was not a vision, but they saw with their eyes, heard with the ears, and felt the natural sensations of Christ's transfiguration (Mk. 9:4-8; Mt. 17:3-8; Lu. 9:30-36). Thus, they were temporarily permitted to see into the coming glory of God in Christ – a reality hidden from them because of Jesus' humanity (Jn. 17:5). Normally, when people looked upon Jesus, they witnessed the power of God manifested through Christ's weak humanity (Ph. 2:6-8). But on the mountain, Peter, James, and John actually witnessed the transcending glory of God's kingdom: "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mk. 9:3). Mark described God's glory as white like snow. How white was Christ's glory to the human eye? His raiment was whiter than any launderer could possibly "white" or "bleach" a garment. In other words, his glory was whiter than anyone can imagine. Likewise, Matthew wrote, "and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Mt. 17:2). He compared Christ's glory to nothing less than the radiance of the sun in all of its brightness. In this way, the brilliance of God's glory was manifested in Jesus. To the natural eye, his glory was brighter and whiter than anything the disciples had ever seen. What was the spiritual impact of this experience on the disciples? Once again, they understood that Jesus, and he alone, is the Son of God (Mk. 8:29; 9:7-8; Mt. 16:15-16; 17:5, 8; Lu. 9:20, 35-36). Miraculous encounters like the transfiguration confirmed to the disciples whom they were following, serving, and witnessing to the world. Peter had already confessed to Jesus: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16). Now he saw the glorious power of his own confession!

### **Scripture Study**

Transfiguration – Mk. 9:1-8; Mt. 17:1-8; Lu. 9:27-36

The Glory of God's Son – Jn. 1:14; 17:5; Ph. 2:6-8; Mt. 16:15-16; 17:5

### **Conclusion**

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he declared, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," authorizing the church to go forth and fulfill the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20). But how could we go forward without him? Apart from Christ, we have no glory and power. Therefore, he sent the Holy Ghost – the same Spirit who anointed him – from the Father to us (Lu. 4:18; Jn. 1:32-34; 14:16-17; 15:26). By his same Spirit, we have access to Christ's glorious power (Ac. 1:8).

# February 25, 2018

## “Money from the Fish”

### Main Point

When we commit ourselves to follow Jesus and to fulfill his mission, he will provide the resources we need to meet our financial requirements.

### Introduction

Jesus, the man, performed miracle after miracle confirming that he was the Christ, the Son of God. He demonstrated his divine power and authority over natural things beyond the control of man. In today’s lesson, we will consider a rather unique miracle of Christ when his disciples supernaturally took money from a fish’s mouth. When was the last time you found money inside of a fish? Probably never! Money may turn up in many unexpected places, but finding it in the mouth of a fish is incredible, to say the least. Nevertheless, this is exactly what happened when Peter went fishing.

### Key Verse

“Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee” (Mt. 17:27).

### Lesson Summary

On this occasion, Jesus and his disciples were in Capernaum. Apparently, he was staying in Peter’s home as he had in the past (consider Mt. 8:5, 14-16; Mk. 1:21, 29-36, Lu. 4:30-31, 38-40). While there, the publicans (i.e. “they that received tribute”) came to Peter to collect taxes, asking, “Doth not your master pay tribute?” (Mt. 17:24). Peter replied, “Yes” (v. 25). Jesus’ life and ministry serve as our pattern of good works that we should know how to please God in all things. We should not only learn of his ways, but we should also follow him and be “doers of the word” (11:29; Jn. 8:29; 10:27; Ep. 5:1; Ja. 1:22). Accordingly, Jesus taught us to follow in his footsteps, saying, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mk. 8:34). No doubt, Jesus was an exemplary citizen who set the perfect example for us. Clearly, he believed in paying taxes because he saw the important role of civil servants who depended on tax revenues for their employment. Jesus was not antigovernment, but he understood that authorities at various levels of society ruled for the overall good of humanity. Sufficient taxation provides the means of supporting necessary government. The apostle Paul explained this exact point in Romans 13:1-7. He referred to civil authorities as “God’s ministers” (vv. 4, 6). In fact, resisting their power is like resisting God (vv.

1-2). Paying taxes is therefore pleasing to God. Consistent with the teachings of Christ, Paul declared, “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (v. 7; see Mt. 22:19-21). Again, Peter clearly affirmed that Jesus was a taxpayer. Now consider. Jesus created all things in the universe, “visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:16). He has all authority in heaven and earth (Mt 28:18). Furthermore, he is the King of God’s kingdom, even the “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Re. 19:16). Moreover, as his followers, we are the children of the kingdom (Mt. 17:26; Ga. 3:26; Col. 1:13). Nevertheless, he gave us his example of paying taxes so that we too would pay taxes. Although we answer to an infinitely “higher power” than man’s authority – and this cannot be compromised – we should willingly submit ourselves to civil authorities in order to maintain an influential witness before others (“lest we should offend them,” Mt. 17:27). What do we learn from Christ’s example of paying taxes? In following the pattern of Christ and being Christ-like, we will accomplish two things: first, we will please God; and second, we will exemplify Christ and his righteousness before the world (1 Pe. 2:9). In order to pay their taxes, Jesus told Peter to go fishing. He explained that the **first** fish he caught would have enough money in its mouth to pay the tax. We should remember that Peter was a fisherman by trade. He could have easily gone back to the fishing business, selling his catch in the market to support himself. But the Lord had called Peter to follow him in the ministry (Mk. 1:16-18). Paying the tax was necessary, but fulfilling Christ’s mission was top priority. Because Peter was committed to Christ and his mission, the Lord miraculously provided all he needed to meet the financial requirements of following him.

### **Scripture Study**

Follow Jesus – Mt. 11:29; Jn. 8:29; 10:27; Ep. 5:1; Ja. 1:22; Mk. 8:34

Pay the tax – Mt. 17:24-27; Ro. 13:1-7; Mt. 22:19-21

Exemplify Christ – Col. 1:16; Mt. 28:18; Re. 19:16; Mt. 17:27; 1 Pe. 2:9

God will provide – Mt. 17:27; Mk. 1:16-18; Ph. 4:19; Ps. 37:25

### **Conclusion**

In the church, we should face every financial obligation with the expectation that “God shall supply all [we] need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Ph. 4:19). We should have complete faith in Christ’s miraculous ability to provide for us as we seek to do God’s will. Sometimes we may have abundance, and sometimes we may lack, but we can be confident the Lord will ultimately satisfy our needs (Ps. 37:25).