

# Faith -N- Focus

## *Adult Bible Studies*

**March 2018**

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**“Messiah’s Miracles, Part Three”**

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# **“Messiah’s Miracles, Part Three”**

## **Monthly Summary**

In this month of *Faith-N-Focus*, we will conclude our study in the miracles of Jesus. His countless miracles served as a confirmation that he was the Christ, the Son of God (Mt. 11:2-6; Jn. 21:25). Today, some people doubt his miracles while others attempt to discredit them, but this is simply the sign of the times. According to Peter and Jude, the last days will be a time of scoffers and mockers (2 Pe. 3:3; Jude 18). Instead of their hearts being turned toward God, such people will be consumed by wicked, unholy desires. They will be murmurers and complainers, rejecting the true testimony of the Lord (Jude 16).

In the minds of some, the miracles of Christ might be more believable to the doubters and mockers, if they saw supernatural signs and wonders routinely. But if his supernatural works were just common everyday occurrences among us, we would no longer perceive them as remarkable exploits, but rather as normal, ordinary feats. Then signs and wonders run the risk of losing their impact as a confirmation of Jesus’ Messiahship. Nevertheless, we should expect his miraculous power and works to be manifested in and through the church today (Jn. 14:11-13).

Truly, we are living in the last days – perilous times – when hearts are severely “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (He. 3:12-13; 2 Ti. 3:1; Ro. 1:28; 1 Ti. 4:1-2). But we must not be discouraged by the godless culture around us. Instead we need to encourage ourselves in the power of the Spirit and the gospel. In the face of doubters and skeptics, we must continue to preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, declaring his miraculous exploits more boldly than ever. No doubt, just as Jesus taught, the majority will reject the good news, but we will win some souls for the kingdom of God if we remain steadfast and immoveable in proclaiming the truth (Mt. 7:13-14). As the apostle Paul explained, we will both save ourselves and the ones who hear us (1 Ti. 4:16). Let’s further consider “Messiah’s Miracles.”

## March 4, 2018

### “Raising Lazarus”

#### Main Point

Jesus’ authority over death confirms that he has the power to give eternal life to those who believe in him.

#### Introduction

When situations turn out wrong and leave us disappointed, this does not mean God has stopped working in our lives. He may actually be working beyond our expectations. In today’s lesson, we will see that Jesus allowed things to get worse in order to show his glory in the end.

#### Key Verse

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (Jn. 11:25).

#### Lesson Summary

In John 11:1-45, we read the story of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, who lived in Bethany. Jesus was a close, personal friend of this family; he loved them very much, and they loved him (vv. 3, 5). This same Mary later anointed Jesus with expensive ointment (v. 2; see also Jn. 12:1-8). At this time, Lazarus became severely sick and was dying. His sisters called for Jesus to come and heal him. But Jesus deliberately delayed in going to them, waiting two more days before he left for Bethany. He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby” (Jn. 11:4). Specifically, why did Jesus delay? He intentionally postponed his trip until Lazarus died in order to accomplish a much higher purpose – raising him from death to life (vv. 11-15). Because the Jewish leaders desired to kill Jesus, he was fulfilling his ministry in the region of Galilee at this time. Going into Judaea presented certain danger (7:1, 30-32, 44-46; 11:7-8, 16). The journey from Galilee unto Bethany of Judaea was approximately four days. So by the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been buried for four days. By all accounts, Jesus arrived too late. The initial reactions of Martha and Mary express this very point: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (vv. 21, 32). Clearly, they believed Jesus had the power to heal all sicknesses and diseases. But from their perspective, he did not come soon enough. Nevertheless, Martha’s faith in Jesus was unshaken, even in the face of death. She declared, “But I know, that even now, **whatsoever** thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee” (v. 22). ”Whatsoever” indicates “anything” – she believed Jesus could do anything, even raise the dead!

This kind of faith set the scene for all that was about to transpire. When Jesus told Martha, “Thy brother shall rise again,” she boldly declared her faith in the resurrection (vv. 23-24). But Jesus spoke of the resurrection – not as an event – as a person, saying, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (v. 25). Both spiritual and physical life is in Jesus, the Son of God, who is the creator and sustainer of all things (vv. 25-27; Jn. 1:1-4; 3:16; 14:6). Mary, along with her comforters, came to Jesus broken and weeping. Being compassionate, he felt their sorrow and wept with them (c.f. Mt. 14:14; Mk. 1:40-41; Lu. 7:11-16). For obvious reasons, they did not understand God’s greater purpose in Lazarus’ death. As they went to the grave weeping, some said, “Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?” (Jn. 11:37). They only thought in terms of healing, but Jesus intended something beyond their expectations (v. 40). At his word, they opened the grave (vv. 39, 41). Jesus prayed, and his prayer expressed God’s purpose in glorifying the Son: “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me” (vv. 41-42). He then cried out, “Lazarus, come forth;” and after he came out of the tomb, Jesus said, “Loose him, and let him go” (vv. 43-44). God’s purpose was accomplished through this powerful display of his glory in Christ. God’s intent was to turn the Jews to faith in Jesus: “Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him” (v. 45). They saw this life-giving miracle with their own eyes. How could they deny that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God? In fact, many Jews later came to see Lazarus for themselves, and because of him they too believed in Jesus Christ. For this reason, the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Lazarus and silence his witness (Jn. 12:1, 9-11).

### **Scripture Study**

Lazarus’ death – Jn. 11:1-22

Jesus is life – Jn. 11:23-44

Believe in Jesus – Jn. 11:42, 45; 12:1, 9-11

### **Conclusion**

Jesus proved his authority over the power of death. He raised people from death to life (Lu. 7:11-16; 8:49-56). In fact, raising the dead was an indicator that he was the Christ, the Son of God (7:20-22). Because of such miracles, many people believed in him. Truly, his authority over death confirms that he has the power to give eternal life to those who believe and trust in him as their Lord and Savior (Jn. 11:25-26).

# March 11, 2018

## “The Withered Fig Tree”

### Main Point

God is powerful and more than able to do anything we need; we must embrace the fulfillment of his promises by faith in order to receive.

### Introduction

The Bible is filled with many stories of those who received great miracles through faith in God. Some of Christ’s supernatural wonders are peculiar, to say the least, such as the miracle in today’s lesson when Jesus cursed a fig tree. Let’s consider the significance of this miracle, both then and now.

### Key Verse

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If he have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done” (Mt. 21:21).

### Lesson Summary

In the week before his crucifixion, Jesus made his “triumphal entry” riding into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey as the crowd cried out, “Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mk. 11:7-10; Zec. 9:9). After he came into Jerusalem, he cleansed the temple casting out those who were selling and buying, saying, “Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Mk. 11:15-17; Is. 56:7). Within this same context, Jesus did something miraculous; he cursed a fig tree, and it withered and died (Mk. 11:12-14, 20-21). When Jesus saw the tree in the distance, he came near expecting to find figs, but finding it bare, he said, “No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever” (v. 14). Strangely enough, the season was too early for figs. Why then did he curse it? By the power of his word, the tree immediately dried up (Mt. 21:19). The disciples were astonished at how quickly it died, saying, “How soon is the fig tree withered away!” (v. 20). What was the significance of this miracle? No doubt, the withering of the fig tree was instructive to his disciples because the Scriptures specifically note, “And his disciples heard it” (Mk. 11:14). The fig tree was figurative of the nation of Israel, and its withering signified the nation’s spiritual demise (consider Lu. 13:34-35; 19:35-38). The Jewish nation as a whole no longer produced spiritual fruit pleasing to God. Therefore, they were rejected by the Lord and judged to be spiritually dead. Moreover, the cursed fig tree demonstrated the ultimate outcome of Jesus’ cleansing the temple (consider

19:41-45). In other words, his cleansing the temple was a testimony against the Jewish religious leaders that God's judgment was coming; and the cursed fig tree was representative of his judgment. Remarkably, the fig tree that signified judgment upon those who rejected Christ and his gospel, also offered great hope to the disciples who believed and followed the Lord. When they expressed their wonderment at the miracle of the fig tree, Jesus said, "Have faith in God" (Mk. 11:22). Jesus said this, not because they lacked faith in God, but because he wanted them to know that faith in God is the key to receiving from him. How powerful then is our faith in God? As Jesus explained, faith in God produces miracle-working results. By faith, the disciples could also curse a fig tree, if necessary. But even more, Jesus assured them that faith in God will move mountains (Mt. 21:21; Mk. 11:23). Then Jesus added, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Mt. 21:22). "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mk. 11:24). Clearly, faith is the essential requirement in order to receive from God. But there is a difference between believing God is able to meet our need (i.e. that he can do anything) and actually believing God has already supplied the need even before we have received it. Believing and trusting in the Lord is not the same as believing we have received the answer to a specific need at a given moment. Miracles are therefore obtained when we exercise a faith that believes we receive, even as we are praying for it (v. 24). We believe it as though it is already accomplished. God's promises work on this very basis; and he requires us to exercise such faith in his supernatural ability to fulfill his promises in our lives (Ro. 4:17-21). God "callesh those things which be not as though they were" (v. 17). Abraham was "fully persuaded that, what he [God] had promised, he was able also to perform" (v. 21; consider Ac. 7:5). To Abraham, all that God promised him was as good as done. Not even the offering up of Isaac could void the promises (He. 11:17-19).

### **Scripture Study**

Judgment – Mk. 11:7-21; Lu. 13:34-35; 19:35-45

Hope and faith – Mk. 11:22-24; Mt. 21:21-22

Abraham's example – Ro. 4:17-21; He. 11:17-19

### **Conclusion**

We need this same kind of miracle-working faith in the church today – a faith that can move mountains. Of course, we need to believe that God is able to do great things, but we also need to exercise a faith in Jesus that believes we receive right now in his name (Ac. 3:6-7, 16; Jn. 16:23-24).

# March 18, 2018

## “Christ’s Resurrection”

### Main Point

The miracle of Christ’s resurrection assures us that the dead in Christ will be raised at his coming.

### Introduction

Jesus did many wonderful miracles during his earthly ministry. Many celebrated his supernatural works while many others scoffed and refused to believe in him. In today’s lesson, we will consider, no doubt, the greatest of Christ’s miracles: his resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection was the ultimate confirmation of his divinity, for who could lay down his life and then take it up again, except the Son of God (Jn. 10:18)?

### Key Verse

“He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee” (Lu. 24:6).

### Lesson Summary

Jesus taught his disciples that he would suffer at the hands of the Gentiles and be crucified, but then he would rise again on the third day (Mk. 8:31; 9:30-32; 10:32-34; Mt. 26:1-2). On one such occasion when Jesus was teaching these things to his disciples, Peter rebuked him, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (16:22). Clearly, he did not yet embrace the necessity of Christ’s death in fulfilling God’s will for mankind’s salvation (v. 23; Lu. 9:44-45). Peter simply could not accept his death. Moreover, the disciples did not yet fully understand Jesus’ teaching about “rising again” (Jn. 20:9). Nevertheless, these teachings of Christ were not hidden, for even their enemies knew Jesus had taught of rising again from the dead. Therefore, the Jewish religious leaders petitioned Pilate to seal the tomb in order to prevent anyone from taking the body of Jesus (Mt. 27:62-66). But the tomb could not contain the life and power of God in Christ! On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determine counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Ac. 2:22-24). Christ’s resurrection was the fulfilment of David’s prophecy:

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Ps. 16:10). Death could not hold him! When the women came to the tomb early Sunday morning with perfume for the body, the stone was already rolled away and Jesus was gone (Mk. 16:1-4). The angels of the Lord declared that he had arisen from the dead. They said, “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, “The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Lu. 24:5-7). On that Sunday morning, Jesus triumphed for all who will believe in his victory over sin and death (Col. 2:10, 12, 15; Ro. 10:9; 8:2). Because he has risen from the dead, we have the assurance that the dead in Christ will also rise again at his coming (1 Co. 15:20-23; 1 Th. 4:14). Jesus taught about the resurrection of the righteous, saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself . . . Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life . . .” (Jn. 5:25-29). Accordingly, Paul taught that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies on that day (Ro. 8:11, 23; Ep. 1:13-14). Moreover, Paul declared our glorious victory over death at Christ’s coming: “for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed . . . So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Co. 15:52-54).

### **Scripture Study**

Christ’s death – Mk. 8:31; 9:30-32; 10:32-34; Mt. 26:1-2; 16:22-23; Lu. 9:44-45; Mt. 27:62-66

He is risen – Ac. 2:22-24; Ps. 16:10; Mk. 16:1-6; Lu. 24:1-7; Mt. 28:1-6

We will rise again – 1 Co. 15:20-23; 1 Th. 4:14; Jn. 5:25-29; Ro. 8:11, 23; Ep. 1:13-14; 1 Co. 15:52-54

### **Conclusion**

Paul declared, “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Ro. 5:10). Truly, we serve a risen Savior. Because Jesus lives, we have the assurance of life eternal (Jn. 3:16). Praise the Lord; we will rise!

# March 25, 2018

## “Vanished”

### Main Point

We see Christ through spiritual vision and know him by the revelation of the Scriptures.

### Introduction

In the New Testament, we read the eyewitness accounts of Christ’s life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Of course, the biblical eyewitnesses are foundational to the faith and doctrine of Christ (2 Pe. 1:16). For the apostle Thomas, seeing was believing (Jn. 20:29). Nevertheless, their faith in Jesus went beyond all they could see with the natural eye. They ultimately believed in him because of their spiritual vision and revelation, and thus declared their eyewitness accounts because they were convinced from the Scriptures that he was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. In today’s lesson, we will see once again that Christ’s supernatural signs established their faith in God’s Word.

### Key Verse

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight” (Lu 24:31).

### Lesson Summary

In Luke 24:13-31, “the beloved physician” shared one of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances (Col. 4:14). After Jesus arose from the dead early Sunday morning, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mk. 16:9). But later on the same day, he walked and talked with two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Lu. 24:13-15). One of them was named Cleopas (v. 18). Interestingly, Mark stated that Jesus “appeared in another form” (Mk. 16:12). Therefore, they did not immediately recognize he was the Lord (Lu. 24:16). Apparently, Jesus did not look the same after his resurrection. Based on the apostle Paul’s explanation, Christ’s spiritual, eternal body was not like his natural, mortal body (c.f. Jn. 20:14-18; 1 Co. 15:44). As he came near them, the two disciples were sad and troubled, discussing all of the events surrounding Jesus’ death. When Jesus questioned them, they began to rehearse the story of the crucifixion and the empty tomb, thinking he knew nothing about these things. Although the women, as well as Peter and John, saw the empty tomb, these two disciples were still not convinced that Jesus had risen. Instead, they were filled with disappointment (Lu. 24:17-24). Jesus then said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his

glory?” (vv. 25-26). Jesus wanted them to believe, not merely because they physically saw him and recognized him with their natural eyes, but he wanted them to believe God’s Word and to see him with spiritual eyes of faith. Jesus then took this opportunity to explain the prophecies written about Christ in the Old Testament. He wanted to open up their understanding from the Scriptures. When they finally reached Emmaus, it was later in the day. The two disciples pressed the Lord to stay with them, so he turned in for the night. When they were eating, the Lord blessed bread, broke it, and gave it to them (consider Mt. 26:26; 14:19; 15:36). Instantly, their eyes were opened, and they knew Jesus through the “breaking of bread” (Lu. 24:27-31, 35). Moreover, they did not know him by his appearance, but they knew him through his disappearance. Jesus vanished before their very eyes (v. 31). This supernatural sign was a miraculous confirmation of his resurrection. One moment, he was there, and in the next, he was gone. After this, any shred of doubt was removed. They knew this was the Lord; Jesus had risen from the dead. What was their reaction to this wonderful experience? They said to each other, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures” (v. 32)? As he declared the Word of God along the way to Emmaus, their spirit was greatly stirred within them. God was working deep in their hearts revealing Christ from the Scriptures. Then as he broke bread with them, they spiritually discerned that this man was actually the Lord. They finally saw him for whom he was. His miraculous disappearance then confirmed and established their understanding.

### **Scripture Study**

On the road to Emmaus – Lu. 24:13-24

Expounding the Scriptures – Lu. 24:25-27

The revelation of Christ – Lu. 24:28-32, 35

### **Conclusion**

After revealing himself to the two disciples, why did Jesus depart in such a miraculous, mysterious way? He departed supernaturally to prove he was in a resurrected, glorified state and was no longer humanly limited by the mortal flesh (v. 26). They saw him with their eyes and heard him with their ears, becoming eyewitnesses of his resurrection. But ultimately, they were convinced from the Scriptures – their hearts burning within them – that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Vanishing before their eyes served to validate and establish their faith in God’s Word.

# April 1, 2018

## “Christ’s Ascension”

### Main Point

Jesus’ bodily ascension miraculously demonstrates how the saints will be caught up in the clouds at the rapture when he comes again.

### Introduction

Sir Isaac Newton has been credited for the discovery of gravity – the natural force that pulls us toward Earth and keeps our feet on the ground. There was a time when mankind could only dream of flying in the clouds and ascending into the heavens. But, of course, these dreams transitioned from possibilities into realities. Overcoming the gravitational pull of Earth, astronauts have rocketed into space, orbited the globe, and floated around under the effects of negligible gravity. In today’s lesson, we will see Jesus defying the forces of gravity when he miraculously ascended back to the Father in heaven.

### Key Verse

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Ac. 1:9).

### Lesson Summary

Jesus came into this world through both supernatural and natural events. Mary’s conception was supernatural, but her pregnancy and birth were quite natural (Lu. 1:30-31, 34-35; 2:4-7). Howbeit, God’s providential hand was upon these events from start to finish. Nevertheless, to outsiders looking on, Jesus came into this world like anyone else through a perfectly natural process. When he stepped forward to fulfill the call of God, his earthly ministry was uniquely characterized and distinguished by supernatural signs and wonders (Ac. 2:22). Following his death and resurrection, Jesus further appeared to his disciples forty days, and demonstrated beyond any doubt (i.e. “by many infallible proofs”) that he had indeed risen from the dead (Ac. 1:3; 1 Co. 15:3-6; compare Jn. 21:1-12 and Lu. 5:1-11). When the appointed time came for him to depart to the Father in heaven, how would he accomplish this? How would the risen Lord go back to the Father? His departing was a purely supernatural event. Luke explained, “And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up

into heaven” (Lu. 24:50-51). He could have simply vanished once again, but instead the apostles watched him as he miraculously went up into heaven and “a cloud received him out of their sight” (Ac. 1:9). When his feet left the ground, no earthly power could hold him (Mt. 28:18). Seeing Jesus defying gravity and rising toward heaven must have been a breathtaking experience. Let’s briefly consider the significance of his ascension into heaven in this manner. His bodily ascension served to confirm that he actually returned to the Father in heaven just as he promised. Jesus declared, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:1-6). Jesus’ bodily ascension into heaven visibly substantiated his promises: namely, that he is the way to the Father, he is preparing a place in heaven for us, and he will come again from the Father to receive us and take us to heaven. In fact, as the apostles watched him ascending, two angels appeared to them, saying, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Ac. 1:11). Furthermore, his bodily ascension affirms the promise and hope of our ascension in the rapture when “the dead in Christ will rise” and the living saints will be changed and “caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Th. 4:13-17; 1 Co. 15:51-52).

### **Scripture Study**

Supernatural wonders – Lu. 1:34-35; Ac. 2:22; Ac. 1:3; Jn. 21:1-12

Miraculous ascension – Ac. 1:1-11; Lu. 24:50-51

Significance of Christ’s ascension – Jn. 14:1-6; Ac. 1:11; 1 Th. 4:13-17;  
1 Co. 15:51-52

### **Conclusion**

Jesus ascended to the right hand of God in heaven (Mk. 16:19; Col. 3:1). Therefore, the hope of our salvation is not of this world, but we look up toward the heavens where “Christ, who is our life, shall appear” (v. 4). Just as Christ ascended, we too will be caught up and “appear with him in glory” (v. 4). Our glorified bodies will rise to meet Jesus in the air, and then we will be with him forever. Let’s encourage each other in God’s promise (1 Th. 4:17-18).