

Session 2

October 22, 2023

ARE MIRACLES RELEVANT?

John 10:22-26; 14:8-14

Almost everybody believes in miracles, in some way or another. How else do you explain the unexplainable? Some look to science to solve the mystery of unexplainable events; others call them coincidences, or even “luck.” But believers know that the course of our lives is guided by and guarded by God. We call that God’s *providence*. But we also know that there have always been times when God “breaks through” the somewhat normal governance of our lives in specific, powerful, and meaningful ways. We call these *miracles*. *The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* defines miracles as “events which unmistakably involve an immediate and powerful action of God designed to reveal His character or purposes.” And so they are. Miracles are not random events, nor are they meaningless. They are powerful and purposeful. When Jesus performed miracles, they were done for several reasons. First, He acted out of *compassion*. Real people had real needs, and real suffering was alleviated by Jesus’ works. Often, the Bible says He was “moved with compassion.” Second, Jesus used miracles to *teach*. Healing the blind was a powerful object lesson demonstrating that lost people are spiritually blinded by sin and need the light of God’s revelation. Healing those who were sick and lame reminds us that we have a fatal condition called sin, that left untreated, leads to death. It’s interesting that Christ “healed” every disease, but in the case of leprosy, the individual always had to be cleansed, reminding us that we can’t just heal ourselves. We need a Savior to do it! When He cast out demons, He taught us that we are all under the bondage of sin and need to be released from its grasp. In this week’s lesson, we are reminded that Jesus also used miracles to *give testimony* of Himself. Three aspects of Christ are indicated.

Miracles testify of Christ’s purpose (10:22-26). John 10 is best known for the theme of “the Good Shepherd” (vv. 1-18). But the chapter that precedes it (the miracle of healing a man born blind), and the verses that follow are important for context. Interestingly, one of the Old Testament motifs of the coming Messiah is that of a shepherd (see Ps. 23, for example). Although some time had passed between 10:21 and 10:22 (perhaps two months?) the context John provided indicates a continuous dispute between Jesus and the religious leaders. They had heard His words and seen His miracles, but they did not understand His truth, or would not submit to it (see vv. 19-21). These internal disputes led to the question they posed in verse 22: “How long are You going to keep us in suspense?” They demanded a definitive answer from Jesus, while ignoring the message He had clearly demonstrated! His response in verses 25 addresses both their *rebellion* at His teaching and the *rejection* of His miraculous proofs. Verse 26 explains why. For reflection: *What do you think Jesus meant when He said they were not His sheep? Did that mean they were not saved, or that they could not be saved?*

Miracles testify of Christ’s position (14:8-11). Here, the context has changed. By the end of chapter 11, the Jews began to plot Christ’s death. Therefore, “Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews” (11:54). Rather, He focused His attention on His disciples. Surprisingly, while they certainly were not hostile toward the Lord, they weren’t much better off faith-wise than the religious leaders! In the preceding verses, Jesus declared that seeing Him in the flesh was paramount to seeing God the Father (see also John 10:30). Here, His mild rebuke of Philip

was much like the firm one He made to the religious leaders. Essentially, He pointed to His teaching as coming from the Father, as well as the works He did (v. 10). Both declared the deity of Jesus. His final statement is interesting. Basically, He said if His teaching was too difficult to accept by faith, then at least accept the visible, tangible signs that He had done! For reflection: *If “seeing is believing,” why do you think both the religious leaders as well as the disciples had such a hard time accepting Christ’s miracles as proof of His deity?*

Miracles testify of Christ’s power (14:12-14). Here, the Lord made some amazing promises to His disciples. The same works that He had been doing, they too, would accomplish. In the most literal sense, this was fulfilled by the disciples in Acts who wrought the same kinds of miracles that Jesus performed. But what are the “greater works” mentioned in verse 12? Certainly, the servant is not greater than the master (John 13:16), so He could not have been referring to *more powerful* miracles. Rather, this verse is best applied to the work of the church. The thought is made clearer by the phrase that follows. That Jesus would go to the Father indicated that His earthly work would be done. But the empowering of the church by the Holy Spirit meant that the *scope* of His work would be increased. Jesus in the flesh was in one place at one time. But the presence of the Spirit meant that He would be present wherever believers were gathered. For reflection: *Verses 13 and 14 seem out of place in the context. What implications can be drawn from these verses about the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and believers?*