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The Miracles of Jesus Christ: Miracles 21-25

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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST

Miracles #21-25:

21. Delivering a Syrophenician's daughter
22. Healing a deaf and speech-impaired man in Decapolis
23. Feeding the 4,000
24. Healing a blind man at Bethsaida
25. Delivering a demon-possessed boy

TWENTY-ONE: Delivering a Syrophenician's Daughter (Mt. 15:21-28; Mk. 7:24-30)

SURVEY

Jesus begins this miracle by testing the faith of the desperate Gentile mother who begged Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter.

- The Messiah: *"It is not right to take the children's bread (a reference to the Jews) and feed it to dogs" (a reference to Gentiles).*

The mother: *"Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."*

Needless to say, she had passed the test with flying colors and her daughter was delivered that very instant.

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the only miracle where Jesus was temporarily silent and non-committal in regard to a miracle for healing.
- It is the first of two miracles involving a young girl. For the first, see miracle 16.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Note how Matthew introduces this miracle: *A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, Lord... have mercy on me! (Mt. 15:22)*

W. L. Pettingill writes:

It will not be forgotten that this woman was a Gentile, and not only a Gentile, but a Canaanite, a representative of that race which was under God's peculiar curse. *'Thou shalt drive out the Canaanite'* — this was the word to Israel upon their entering the land of Canaan; and the promise of Zechariah 14:21, looking forward to the restored land and restored temple worship, says, *'In that day there shall be no more*

the Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of host.' But grace is without any limit and overleaps all obstacles. Through Israel's failure, this despised outcast receives the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich. It is at first a most astonishing thing to see the Lord Jesus refusing to respond to this woman's cry of need. It is so unlike him, whose ears are always open to the slightest call upon his name. But he cannot answer her. She is calling upon him as the Son of David; and so he is, but as such, as Son of David, he has nothing to do with a Canaanite. (*The Gospel of the Kingdom*, Fundamental Truth Publishers, Findlay, Ohio, p. 183.)

- Usually it was the fickle crowds that kept seekers from Him, but on this occasion and at least one other, it was the disciples themselves! Note:
 1. *"But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us."* (Mt. 15:23)
 2. *"Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them."* (Mt. 19:13)
- This young girl now joins a number of demon-possessed females to be delivered by Jesus. Note:
 1. *"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."* (Mk. 16:9)
 2. *"And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils"* (Lk. 8:2).

TWENTY-TWO: Healing a Deaf Mute in Decapolis (Mk. 7:31-37)

SURVEY

Jesus placed His fingers in the ears of a deaf-mute, spit, touched the man's tongue, looked up into heaven, and sighed, *"Be opened."* Immediately the man could both hear and speak.

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the first of three occasions on which Jesus spat when accomplishing a miracle. The other two are:
 1. Upon healing a blind man in Bethsaida (Mk. 8:23)
 2. Upon healing a blind man in Jerusalem (Jn. 9:6)

It should be noted that all three cases involved blind individuals.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- The statement of the amazed crowd, *"He hath done all things well,"* perfectly summarizes the earthly ministry of Jesus perhaps more than any other in the entire New Testament.
- The first stanza of Fanny J. Crosby's beautiful gospel song, *All The Way My Savior Leads Me*, captures in melody fashion this precious truth:

*"All the way my Savior leads me
 What have I to ask beside?
 Can I doubt His tender mercy,
 Who thru life has been my Guide?
 Heavenly peace, divinest Comfort,
 Here by faith in Him to dwell!
 For I know, whate'er befall me,
 Jesus doeth all things well. "*

TWENTY-THREE: Feeding the 4,000 (Mt. 15:32-39; Mk. 8:1-9)

SURVEY

Jesus feeds a hungry crowd who had not eaten in three days, by supernaturally multiplying seven loaves and a few fish. Following the bountiful meal, seven basketfuls of food were collected by the disciples.

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the second of two occasions where Jesus fed the hungry multitudes. See also miracle 19.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Some have attempted to show the feeding of the 5,000 and that of the 4,000 were actually the same event, suggesting that the Gospel writers got their details mixed up. But Jesus Himself told us that they were two separate and distinct events.

"When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They said unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven" (Mk. 8:19-20).

- Note the comparisons and contrasts between these two events:
 1. Compared with the feeding of the 5,000: There are several similarities between these two miracles:
 - a. Christ showed compassion toward both groups.
 - b. He asked His disciples what should be done.

- c. He had the people sit down in orderly groups.
 - d. He supernaturally fed them by multiplying a few fish and loaves.
2. Contrasted with the feeding of the 5,000: There are a number of differences between these two miracles:
- a. The size of the crowd: One had 5,000 men; the other 4,000.
 - b. The duration involved: The 5,000 men had been with Him for one day; the 4000 for three days.
 - c. The original food: Christ used five loaves and two fishes to feed the 5,000, while using seven loaves and an unspecified number of fish in caring for the 4,000.
 - d. The remains: Twelve baskets were left over at the feeding of 5,000, and seven after the 4,000.
 - e. The Gospel record: All four Gospel writers record the feeding of the 5,000, while only Matthew and Mark speak of the 4,000.

TWENTY-FOUR: Healing a Blind Man at Bethsaida (Mk. 8:22-26)

SURVEY

Jesus began this miracle by placing His hands on the man and spitting in his eyes.

The Savior: *"Do you see anything?"*

The sightless: *"I see people; they look like trees walking around."*

Jesus touched the man's eyes, causing him to now see clearly and completely.

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is Jesus' only miracle accomplished in two stages.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- The spiritual application here is crystal clear and sorely needed today. We need that second touch by Jesus, allowing us to see *"every man clearly"* as God does.
- As can be seen later, Jesus' disciples would often see men as "trees".

1. Desplicable trees

"And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye

are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village." (Lk. 9:52-56)

2. Bothersome trees

"And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." (Lk. 18:15-17)

3. Competitive trees

"And John answered him, saying, master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." (Mk. 9:38-41)

4. Sinful trees

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (Jn. 9:1-3)

5. Unclean trees

"On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." (Acts 10:9-15)

- As can be seen today, Jesus' disciples do often see men as trees. Thus:
 1. As a Christian leader, do I view my staff and associates simply as servant trees whose main task is to help me in building my own personal kingdom?
 2. As a Christian layperson, do I view my family members and friends merely as enabling trees, existing primarily to meet my needs and enhance my goals?

TWENTY-FIVE: Delivering a Demon-Possessed Boy (Mt. 17:14-18; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:38-42)

SURVEY

A desperate father begs Jesus to deliver his tormented son from a cruel and vicious demon who would cause him to fall into fire and water, cast him to the ground, throw him into convulsions, and was slowly killing him. Note the ensuing conversation:

The father: *"If you can do anything, please do it."*

The Savior: *"If you believe, I can do all things."*

The father: *"Lord, I believe—help thou my unbelief."*

With this, Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and freed the son.

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the final of three instances in which Jesus would supernaturally minister to an only child.
 1. He raised from the dead the only son of a widow (Lk. 7:12).
 2. He raised from the dead the only daughter of Jairus (Lk. 8:42).
- It is the only miracle showing the utter inability of the disciples to help the person in need.
 1. As testified to by the father: *"And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not."* (Lk. 9:40)
 2. As testified to by the disciples themselves: *"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?"* (Mt. 17:19)
- This is the second of two of the most frightful and graphic descriptions regarding the horrors of demon possession in the entire Bible! For the first, see miracle 14.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Leaving the Mount of Transfiguration, our Lord enters the valley of disfiguration. On the mountain, the friends of heaven (Moses and Elijah) had comforted Him. In the valley, the foes of hell would challenge Him! In essence, these words serve to summarize Jesus' ministry and mission.
- As His faithful followers we are called upon to do the same. Note Paul's words:
"Blessed be God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." (2 Cor. 1:3-5)
Thus, in church the believer may sing about "The Sweet By and By" but upon leaving, he enters the world of the "Nasty Now and Now."

- Note the Father's struggle for faith:

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." (Mk. 9:24)

This kind of struggling, desperate faith, even though plagued with doubt, will reach the heart of God immediately. The psalmist spoke of this:

"Like a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." (Psa. 103:13-14)

Question: How much faith does it take to please God?

Response: How much faith do you have?

Illustration: Let us suppose you face a million-dollar need but only have a ten-dollar bill. God's plan in solving this is both gracious and simple: Give Him your ten dollars and He will add the remaining \$999,990. However small our faith, He wants it all. Our problem, however, is that all too often we shortchange Him on the ten dollars.

- Why could not the disciples help this desperate father and his demon-possessed son?

On two previous occasions, they had been able to cast out demons.

"And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (Mk. 6:13).

"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord even the devils are subject unto us through thy name" (Lk. 10:17).

Why then could they not help this heartbroken father? There were at least four reasons.

1. They had too little faith (Mt. 17:20).
2. They had too little self-denial (Mk. 9:29).
3. They had too little prayer (Mk. 9:29).
4. They had too much bickering (Mk. 9:14).

It is so easy to become an Ichabod Christian (meaning *"the glory of the Lord hath departed;"* see 1 Sam. 4:21-22) without even being aware of it until the crisis comes.

The Old Testament strongman Samson serves as a classic and tragic example of this very thing!

"That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart, Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee,

Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.” (Judg. 16:17-20)