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The Miracles of Jesus Christ: Miracles 26-30

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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST

Miracles #26-30:

26. Finding the tax money
27. Healing a man born blind
28. Healing a crippled woman on the Sabbath
29. Healing a man with dropsy
30. Raising of Lazarus

TWENTY-SIX: Finding the Tax Money in a Fish (Mt. 17:24-27)

SURVEY

Simon Peter promises a tax collector that Jesus would pay the imposed temple tax. The following dialogue then occurs:

Jesus: *"Peter, from whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes? from their own sons or from others?"*

Peter: *"From others."*

Jesus: *"Then the sons are exempt. But so that we might not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch, open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."*

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the only miracle involving a brute creature.
- It is the only miracle resulting in a money coin.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- This temple tax, owed by all Jews from age twenty upward, was two drachma, approximately two days' wages. It was to be used for the temple upkeep and repair. There were three specific occasions recorded in the Old Testament when this tax was collected.
 1. During the time of Moses (Ex. 30:13, 38:26)
 2. During the time of Joash—This Judean king actually had a special chest built and placed outside by the temple gate to receive the tax (2 Chron. 24:9-14).

3. During the time of Nehemiah (Neh. 10:32)

- Note Peter's thoughtless response to the tax collector's demand:

They ask: *"Doth not your master pay tribute?"*

He answered: *"Yes."*

Here Peter committed a serious blunder. He committed Jesus to do something without first asking Him. Nathan the prophet once did the same thing when advising King David.

It also had to do with the temple. Upon hearing David's desire to construct a temple, Nathan responded:

"Then Nathan said to David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee" (1 Chron. 17:2).

But then God stepped in:

"And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in" (1 Chron. 17:3-4).

The conclusion of the matter was that God had already determined that Solomon (David's son) would build the temple.

- Jesus told Peter why he should not have to pay the tax:

1. He owned the temple (Mal. 3:1).
2. He had previously cleansed the temple (Jn. 2:16).
3. He was the eternal Son of God (Mt. 16:16).

- He then told Peter why he should pay the tax:

1. To maintain a good testimony:

"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them."

Here the Savior gave a beautiful example of properly using our Christian liberty, as later echoed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 8-10:

"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor. 8:9, 12; 9:22)

2. To increase Peter's faith

3. To illustrate His work as the second Adam:

When correctly understood, this amazing miracle serves to illustrate not only the deity of Christ, but even more, His perfect humanity. What was He doing here? In essence, Jesus was fulfilling the very first command in the Bible given to Adam concerning the world of nature:

“And God ...said ... subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28).

Our Lord thus, in some mysterious manner (lost to us after Adam's sin), was able to communicate and exercise control over a fish swimming in the waters of Galilee.

- It should be noted here that this fish *obeyed* its Creator!

1. As did the ravens near a brook

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.” (1 Kings 17:1-6)

2. As did the lions in a den

“Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God” (Dan. 6:21-23).

Tragically, the only two creatures able to *disobey* their Creator are *angels* and *human beings*!

TWENTY-SEVEN: Healing a Man Born Blind (Jn. 9:1-7)

SURVEY

Jesus began this miracle by spitting on the ground, making mud with the saliva, put it on the man's eyes, and said: *“Go wash in the pool of Siloam.”* The blind man obeyed and was immediately able to see!

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the only miracle where Jesus commanded the person to be healed to do something.
- This is the final of six miracles where the parents of the recipient are involved. The other five are miracles 2, 11, 16, 21, and 25.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Notice the insensitivity and callousness shown by the disciples here:

"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?" (Jn. 9:1-2)

As it can be seen, there was no desire on their part to help this pitiful man. Rather, his condition served simply as a focal point for an academic, theological discussion!

- At first reading, this seems to be a very silly question, for how could this poor, sightless man be suffering for his sin if he was born blind? However, some rabbis felt a baby could sin in its mother's womb, or that its soul might have sinned in a preexistent state. They also held that terrible punishment from God came upon certain people because of the sin of their parents.

This grievous error, of course, is totally refuted by both Moses and Ezekiel.

"The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16).

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20).

- Jesus answered their question as follows:

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (Jn. 9:3)

Here Jesus corrects that terrible teaching that says that all suffering is a direct result of personal sin. The disciples at this point had made the same false assumption that Job's three "friends" had once made (see Job 4:7-8; 8:20; 20:4-5), and that many modern "faith healers" today still make. However, God Himself had severely rebuked the companions of Job for their wicked judgment:

"And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job 42:7).

- After the healing of the blind man the wicked Pharisees interrogated his parents:

"And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind." (Jn. 9:19-22).

How tragic to contemplate the strong possibility that these seeing parents of a sightless son refused the light offered by Christ and probably died still blinded by their sins. Why did this happen? Solomon gives us the sad answer:

"The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Prov. 29:25).

This sad truth is reconfirmed on two additional occasions apart from John 9:

1. *"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn. 12:42-43).*
2. *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).*

- The Pharisees continued their attack on Jesus:

"Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them." (Jn. 9:16)

Whenever Jesus enters the scene a division automatically develops. A person might accept His claims or deny them, but he or she cannot ignore them.

*"What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be!
Someday your heart will be asking,
What will He do with me?"*

- The amazing response by the former blind man to Jesus' critics must surely rank among the most simple yet sublime answers of all time!

"Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." (Jn. 9:24-25)

- As a final observation, note the progressive revelation given to this healed blind man by the Holy Spirit regarding the person of Jesus:

In 9:11 he calls Him a man.

In 9:17 he calls Him a prophet.

In 9:32 he calls Him a miracle worker.

In 9:33 he calls Him a messenger from God.

In 9:35-38 he worships Him as the Son of God.

TWENTY-EIGHT: Healing a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath (Lk. 13:10-17)

SURVEY

Jesus encountered this woman who had been bent over for eighteen long years while He was teaching in a synagogue. Calling her forward, He said:

"Woman, you are set free from your infirmity."

He then laid hands on her and she immediately straightened up and praised God!

SIGNIFICANCE

- Jesus uses His sharpest rebuke yet in performing this miracle, saying to the critical synagogue ruler, *"thou hypocrite!"*
- It is the third of three miracles where the actual number of years is given in regard to the length of their suffering.
 1. In this case, eighteen years (Lk. 13:11)
 2. That of a woman with an issue of blood, twelve years (Mt. 9:20)
 3. That of a crippled man, thirty-eight years (Jn. 5:5)

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- This woman was probably a believer. Jesus refers to her as *"a daughter of Abraham."* In addition, the text indicates that she was a faithful member of the synagogue (Lk. 13:10-11).
- In spite of this, she had been bound by Satan for nearly two decades. Here it should be said that although Satan (or his fallen angels) cannot possess a believer, he can oppress and physically afflict a child of God. There are two classic examples of this satanic physical affliction in the Scriptures.
 1. The example of Job (Job 1-2)

"So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." (Job 2:7)
 2. The example of Paul

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." (2 Cor. 12:7)
- During His meeting with Cornelius, Simon Peter would speak of this:

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." (Acts 10:38)

TWENTY-NINE: Healing a Man with Dropsy (Lk. 14:1-6)

SURVEY

During a Sabbath luncheon in the house of a prominent Pharisee, Jesus encounters a man suffering with dropsy. Turning to the legalistic Pharisees who were present, He asks:

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

Receiving no answer, He touched the man and healed him.

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is the only recorded miracle done during a meal in the home of a Pharisee.

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- This supper was probably a set-up arranged by the Pharisees to trap Jesus, hoping He would do something unlawful.
 1. It was on the Sabbath.
 2. A very sick man was there who suffered from dropsy. Dropsy was an abnormal accumulation of watery fluid in the body, which caused hideous swelling in the abdomen, legs, and feet. It was symptomatic of cardiac disease. In light of this, it is highly unlikely that this poor, suffering creature would be invited to the home of a Pharisee, especially on the Sabbath. To the contrary, he would have been utterly refused entrance.
- According to the sacred account Jesus touched this man. This was in stark contrast to the legalistic Pharisees who not only would have refused to touch the leper, the blind, the deaf, the maimed, etc., but would actually hurry home in horror to take a ceremonial bath if their shadow should come into contact with the shadow of those unclean outcasts! But not the Savior! He was a "hands-on Healer," as demonstrated by those He personally touched:
 1. A leper (Mt. 8:3)
 2. Peter's mother-in-law (Mt. 8:15)
 3. A deaf mute (Mk. 7:33)
 4. Two blind men (Mt. 20:34)
 5. A man born blind (Jn. 9:6)
 6. Malchus' ear (Lk. 22:51)
 7. Little children (Mk. 10:13)
 8. His frightened disciple (Mt. 17:7)

THIRTY: Raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:17-44)

SURVEY

After comforting Lazarus' grieving sisters, Mary and Martha, in their hour of sorrow following Lazarus' death, and expressing His own personal grief, Jesus visits the tomb of the dead man. He then utters four statements:

- To Martha: *"Take away the stone."*
- To His Father: *"Thank you for hearing me. I do this that those watching may believe that you sent me."*
- To Lazarus: *"Lazarus come out!"*
- To those standing by: *"Take off the grave clothes and let him go."*

SIGNIFICANCE

- More space is given over to this miracle than to any other of the thirty-five performed by Jesus.
- More individuals are mentioned by name here than can be found in any other miracle (Lazarus, Mary, Martha, and Thomas).
- It marks the final of three occasions where Jesus raised someone from the dead. For the first two, see miracles 11 and 16.
- This is the first of three great cries from the lips of the Savior. All three have to do with the glorious subject of resurrection.
 1. The cry from the cemetery: *"Lazarus, come forth."*
 2. The cry from the cross: *"Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose."* (Mt. 27:50-52)
 3. The cry from the clouds: *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."* (1 Thess. 4:16)
- Humanly speaking, this miracle would lead to the death of Jesus.

"Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death." (Jn. 11:53)

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- Lazarus, Mary, and Martha lived in Bethany, a little Jewish town two miles east of the Mount of Olives. At least four key events would transpire here in the life of Jesus:

1. The resurrection of Lazarus (Jn. 11:44)
 2. His anointing by Mary (Mt. 26:6)
 3. The starting point for His triumphal entry (Mk. 11:1)
 4. His final blessing upon the disciples just prior to the ascension (Lk. 24:50)
- Observe the frequency of the names Lazarus, Mary, and Martha in John 11:
 1. Lazarus is mentioned six times (11:1, 2, 5, 11, 14, 43).
 2. Mary is mentioned seven times (11:1, 2, 19, 20, 28, 31, 32).
 3. Martha is mentioned eight times (11:1, 5, 19, 20, 21, 24, 30, 39).
 - The reason for this can be seen by a statement made during Christ's Good Shepherd sermon, preached just prior to this: *"He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."* (Jn. 10:3)
 - John, chapter 11, can be favorably compared with John, chapter 9.
 1. In John 9 Jesus used the tragedy of blindness as an opportunity to manifest the power of God.

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (Jn. 9:3)
 2. In John 11 Jesus used the tragedy of death as an opportunity to manifest the glory of God.

"When Jesus heard that, 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)
 3. Both chapters thus refute that terrible lie which claims all suffering is a result of personal sin.
 4. More information is provided regarding these two miracles than any other of the thirty-five Jesus performed.
 5. Both miracles would only further harden the hearts of Jesus' enemies. Note:

"Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner." (Jn. 9:24)

"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation ... Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him." (Jn. 11:47-48, 57)
 - Upon hearing of Jesus' decision to attend Lazarus' funeral and raise him from the dead, Thomas expressed grave doubts:

"Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him." (Jn. 11:16)

The New Testament relates three incidents between Thomas and Christ. The Gospel of John records all three. In each of them he lives up to his reputation as "doubting Thomas."

1. Here he doubts the power of Christ.
2. In the Upper Room he doubts the promise of Christ.

"Thomas saith unto him, Lord we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (Jn. 14:5)

3. After the resurrection He at first doubted the very person of Christ. (Jn. 20:24-29)

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (Jn. 20:24-25)

- We note that He waited until Lazarus had been dead for four days. He may have done this because of the superstition among the Jews that after death the spirit hovered over the body for three days, and a resurrection up to that time was at least remotely possible. But after this period, all hope was gone.
- Martha, and not Mary, is the heroine of this story. (See Lk. 10:38-42 where the opposite was true.)
 1. It was Martha who went to meet Jesus while Mary remained in the house (Jn. 11:20).
 2. Martha's great testimony here ranks equally as important as that given by Simon Peter on another occasion.
- Both contain similar language, but Martha offered hers under far more difficult circumstances:
 1. Peter's testimony

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mt. 16:16)
 2. Martha's testimony

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." (Jn. 11:25-27)
- Martha's words to Mary here are the most beneficial and blessed ones a believer can give to another believer in the hour of greatest need.

"She went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." (Jn. 11:28)

- Upon meeting Jesus, Mary said the exact same thing Martha had just said:

"Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died...Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." (Jn. 11:21, 32)

To rephrase the little poem:

Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'

- The account tells us of Jesus' sorrow at this time:

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." (Jn. 11:33-35)

- This contains the shortest verse in the English Bible, but in some ways it is the longest. This is the first of at least three occasions on which our Lord wept.

1. He wept over the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41).

2. He wept in Gethsemane — *"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."* (Heb. 5:7)

- What caused His tears?

1. He wept because of His true humanity (see Heb. 4:14-16).

2. He wept because of the wicked men He saw around Him (see Jn. 11:37, 46).

3. He wept (according to an early Christian tradition) because He was soon to bring Lazarus back from the bliss of paradise to this earthly vale of tears!

- Twice we read of Jesus groaning (Jn. 11:33, 38). The Greek word here is *embrim*, suggesting anger. It is translated "indignation" in Mk. 14:5. Thus, the groanings of Christ may have indicated His grief and anger over death itself, a tragic (and unnecessary) result of Adam's sin (see Rom. 5:12).

- Standing outside the tomb that contained the body of Lazarus, Jesus gives some specific and pointed instructions.

Here we see an example of that desired cooperation God seeks between the Savior and the soul winner in raising dead sinners to newness of life. Jesus issued three commands in accomplishing this miracle. The first and third were directed toward the friends of the corpse, while the second was given to the corpse itself. Note:

1. *"Take ye away the stone"* (Jn. 11:39). The job of the soul winner is to first remove all human barriers so that Christ can come in direct contact with a lost person.

2. *"Lazarus, come forth"* (Jn. 11:43). Only Christ, of course, can do this.
3. *"Loose him, and let him go"* (Jn. 11:44). In a word, this speaks of discipleship, that is, ministering to the new convert.