

Text: Matthew 15:29-39

Title: More Miracles

Truth: God is giving witness of the deity of Jesus Christ.

Date/Location: Wednesday March 16, 2022 at FBC

Introduction

We saw last time in 15:21-28 that the mercy and compassion of Jesus extended to the Gentiles, even during the initial phase of His ministry, which was Jewish-focused.

I. Travel Notes, v. 29

A. The text says in v. 29 that the Lord departed and went along the Sea of Galilee. Recall that in Tyre and Sidon, He was quite a few miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Evidently he looped around toward the east and came to “the other side of the Jordan” in the region we know as Decapolis. See Mark 7:31 for a bit more detail on this itinerary.



B. Decapolis is from deka- and -polis, meaning “10 cities/towns,” historically a league of 10 towns, largely Gentile in composition and Hellenistic in culture. Some of the cities were Philadelphia, Gerasa, Gadara, Hippos, and Damascus.

- C. In Mark 5:1-20, the Lord healed a demon-possessed man and told him to go back home and tell the people what the Lord had done for Him. 5:20 says that he went back to Decapolis and proclaimed what Jesus did. People there were amazed. He was in effect sort of like John the Baptist, a messenger that went before Him, preparing the people for this visit of the Lord to their area.
- D. The Lord sat down on a mountain in the region. Remember that when we say “mountain,” we do not mean a mountain like Everest or McKinley (Denali). It would be a relatively modest mountain in our parlance. In Syria, for example, there are several mountains 5,000 to 6,000 feet in elevation.

II. Miracles of Healing, v. 30-31

- A. The healing of the demoniac was troubling to the people at the time. They asked Jesus to leave. The present bunch may have been a different sub-group of people who were more receptive to the notion of exorcism of demons, or some of the same people who had a change of mind after they saw the long-lasting transformation of the man saved by Jesus from a life of demonism.
- B. In any case, a huge crowd brought sick people with them. These included:
1. Lame. Unable to walk easily. Many specific maladies could be the cause, from congenital to worn-out joints due to old age.
 2. Blind. Cannot see. I just learned that one of our sisters had an infection in her eye years ago that caused her to be blind in that eye. It was fixable with a new cornea and/or lens. Blindness due to lack of eyeglasses,

cataracts, eye infections, glaucoma, macular degeneration, physical injuries, or congenital blindness are all severe hazards that we know very little about because of improved medical technology.

3. Mute. Unable to speak. Whether due to injury to the vocal cord, stroke, autism, or other problems, this is still an issue today for many. Often this is coupled with deafness, since being deaf makes it difficult to learn to speak intelligibly. I do not know why this word and the next are swapped in the NIV, but it is of no consequence. Likely a small manuscript difference is the explanation.
 4. Maimed, crippled. Often regarding malformed or non-functional hands or feet. This could be again congenital, or from a stroke or injury. Many other afflictions fit under this general term.
 5. Many others. The above list seems daunting, but there were many more people and varieties of sickness. Stop and think about the various ways that people can become ill or have health problems. You would never be able to list them all. A UM Medical school estimate was that there are roughly 10,000 human diseases. Most of them are rare or orphan diseases, but there are still hundreds of common ones. This is because the human body is so complex in terms of structure and chemistry, there are a myriad of ways that it can break.
- C. The people laid these sick folk before Jesus, at his feet. They were submitting themselves to His healing power. (Imaging the opposite attitude: “I’m not going to him, that is crazy. I’ll just live the way I have been for all these years.”)

- D. "And He healed them." What a simple narrative. The miracles were pouring out of Jesus at a rate of many per hour. Who had done this in the history of the world? No one. There were periods of miracles, but nothing like this.
- E. Accordingly, the crowds were amazed. The mute spoke, the maimed were whole, the lame were walking, the blind were seeing. This was no modern healing meeting where no one is really healed. This was real, and beyond human explanation.
- F. As should be the case, they glorified the God of Israel. They did not recognize that God the Son was in front of them. That is because His ministry was somewhat "under cover" to glorify the Father (John 17:4) instead of glorifying Himself. Such glory would come later, after His kenosis and suffering.
- G. In accordance with Old Testament teaching, God was authenticating Jesus as His messenger, and more than a messenger (Deuteronomy chapter 13, and 18:21-22). He was "the Prophet" who would come, and He was also the King and Priest.

III. Miracle of Feeding 4,000, v. 32-39

- A. This situation is very similar to the earlier miracle recorded one chapter prior in 14.
- B. Once again, the Lord had compassion on the people because they had been hanging around for three days. They had no provisions left from what they had brought and would need some nourishment for their long journey back.

- C. Once again, the disciples express doubt that they could obtain enough bread to feed the thousands of people that were before them. Verse 38 says that there were 4,000 men, along with women and children, so probably over 10,000 people altogether. That is a large banquet by anyone's standards, as you know if you have tried to feed a large group.
- D. The Lord asked what they already had in their possession. He was going to use what they had as a starting point. Apply: In your service to God, you also should use what you already have as the starting point. Do not ask God for more to serve Him if you are not already serving him "all out."
- E. The Lord directed the meal by having people sit down, took the seven loaves and few fish and gave thanks to God the Father, and then distributed them.
- F. There were seven baskets of fragments left over. In other words, there was one large basket of leftovers for each of the original seven loaves. There was more left at the end than there was at the beginning. A secular person will scoff at this and dismiss it as legend or myth. We believe the eyewitness reports that is given here. Because of the nature of the case (Who we are talking about, the evidence from other sources, the transformation in our own lives, the illumination of the Holy Spirit), we have no reason to doubt what is written here.
- G. Jesus left there and traveled across the Sea of Galilee to the western shore at the widest part of the Sea, where Magdala was.

Conclusion

These miracles authenticate Jesus as a messenger of God, and more than that, as the Son of God. How can we be sure?

Look at John 5:18-46. The Lord claims equality with the Father, is able to give life, is responsible for all judgment (Acts 17:30-31), and will raise the dead. These are functions of God, not man. Beyond that, Jesus calls them to hear the testimony of witnesses to his claims: John the Baptist, the greater witness of His miraculous works; the Father who testified of Jesus (remember His voice from heaven?), and the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets of old. We could also add the angels from Luke 2:11, *and* the New Testament Scriptures. Their cumulative testimony of these witnesses make it clear Who we are reading about here: the Son of God.

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