

# Gift of a Promise: His Word and His Body

## Unit Two

### Lesson 8

## Revealing God's Glory

### Miracles

*Signs of the power of God clearly present and acting in the World...*



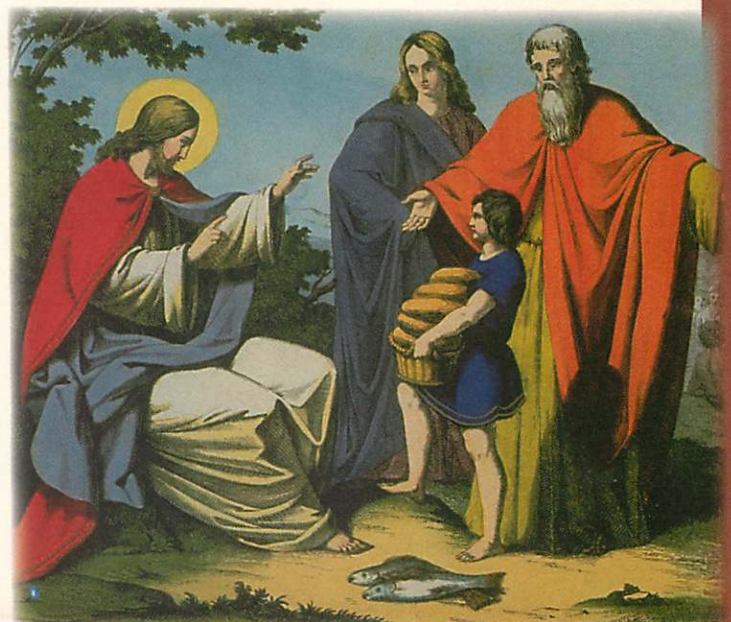
The Book of Psalms identifies our God as a 'God of wonders.' (Ps 136:4) We believe that God is the Creator of everything and with just a thought he can sustain all that is. It is accepted by people of faith that God has the power to suspend natural law in order to fulfill his purpose. Miracles were a part of the ministry of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and of course Jesus and the apostles, and their miracles almost always witnessed that the message was from God himself.

Many people seek to experience the miraculous power of God, and will go to extraordinary measures to have

that experience, because they want confirmation that God exists. God willingly gave signs to Moses (Exodus 4:1-9) and Gideon (Judges 6:11-22) to confirm his word. Miracles can aid a person's coming to faith, as in John 2:23: "Many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name."

However, there comes a time when enough miracles have been performed—the truth has been proven—and it is time to exercise faith.

There are those today whose hearts are hardened toward the truth...they do not want to believe in the power of God clearly present and acting in the world. They want to see something sensational, but they have no real desire to know the truth of Christ.



One of Jesus' greatest miracles is retold in all four of the Gospels: it is the story of how two fish and five loaves of bread fed thousands of hungry people. In John's Gospel the story continues and we see that those who just benefited from the miracle followed Jesus to the other side of Galilee. However, Jesus realized that their motive was only to get some more food, and said "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill" (John 6:26). The crowd's desire was not to know Christ or even to see more miracles; it was simply to fill their stomachs again.

It is the true 'People of God'—people who have received the gift of faith and work at deepening it — who already have confidence in God and believe without need of miracles. They know that rather than seeking after a new miracle it is wise to simply take God at his Word. Simple faith is more pleasing to the Lord than a reliance on dazzling physical experiences. Remember the words of Jesus to Thomas in John 20:29: "because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

## A Litany of Miracles

Below are ten eye-witness accounts of the miracles of Jesus as told by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Match the clue with the correct Scripture verse.

### Scripture

1. Luke 8:22-25 \_\_\_
2. Luke 8:26-33 \_\_\_
3. Luke 8:40-42, 49-56 \_\_\_
4. Luke 8:43-48 \_\_\_
5. John 2:1-11 \_\_\_
6. Mark 6:30-44 \_\_\_
7. Matthew 9:1-8 \_\_\_
8. Matthew 20:29-34 \_\_\_
9. Matthew 8: 1-4 \_\_\_
10. Luke 7: 11-15 \_\_\_



## Important Clues

- a. Jesus said, "Get up, pick up your bed, and go home!"
- b. Jesus asked "Who touched me?" And then said, "your faith has saved you."
- c. Jesus had pity on them and touched their eyes; at once they were able to see.
- d. This story told about a naked man and a large herd of pigs.
- e. Jesus heals the man with a skin disease and tells him to offer the sacrifice that Moses ordered.
- f. Jesus told the widow not to cry because her son had died.
- g. This synagogue official had a very sick daughter.
- h. Jesus was asleep in the boat; the disciples thought they were going to die.
- i. Jesus told the disciples to feed many hungry people.
- j. Jesus' mother said, "Do whatever he tells you."



Identify some of the different types of miracles Jesus performed by filling in the blanks.

### Example:

Jesus...Calms the sea

C \_ \_ M \_ T \_ \_ \_ \_ A.

Jesus healed the...

1. B \_ \_ \_ \_
2. \_ U \_ E
3. \_ A R \_ L \_ \_ E D
4. D \_ \_ O \_ S
5. \_ \_ \_ R \_
6. \_ E \_ E R

Bonus Question: Jesus' first miracle as described in the Gospel of John:

7. W \_ \_ D I \_ G \_ \_ A \_ \_  
A \_ C \_ \_ A

## Miracles... Much More Than a Virtual Reality!

**Virtual reality (VR)** is a term that applies to computer-simulated environments that can simulate physical presence without our being able to touch it or experience it firsthand. Undoubtedly, it is an amazing piece of technology. Today many theme parks have simulation rides and 4-D experiences that give you the amazing sensation of actually becoming a physical part of the computer-generated reality.



One can only wonder why people who actually witnessed one of Jesus' miracles still did not believe in him. Did they think it was a trick or some type of magic act that he was performing? We only have the opportunity to read the accounts of others who wrote in the Bible about Jesus' works of mercy, yet many people today believe that Jesus actually did perform miracles, that he did create food for thousands, he did turn water into wine, and he did raise Lazarus from the dead. In John 2:23 it tells us that many believed in him because of the miracles...but then again some walked away despite what they saw.

Through the miracle accounts of the Bible, we have a sense of virtual reality, we know Jesus exists, and we are tied to him through faith. But wouldn't it be great to create a Virtual Reality that would allow you to actually simulate your presence in one of Jesus' miracles. Perhaps you would choose to be present at the wedding feast, or perhaps you would like to feel Jesus' healing touch restoring your sight or healing your cripple legs.

In which miracle of those you just read would you place yourself?

Who are you in the scene?

What are you seeing and feeling?

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## A Litany of Miracles

### lit·a·ny:

a prayer consisting of a series of lines spoken alternately by a leader and the congregation

**Leader:** Through your miracles, oh Lord, you reveal the power, the glory and the mercy of the Father.

**All:** We pray for your healing power to transform our world and to renew our life.

**Leader:** You help the blind to see the truth.

**All:** Help me Lord to see your miracles.

**Leader:** You help the lame to walk.

**All:** Help me Lord to walk in your ways.

**Leader:** You restore the deaf and mute.

**All:** Lord heal my inability to hear and my defiance in proclaiming your Good News.

**Leader:** You raise the dead to life.

**All:** Through your death on the Cross you restore my soul and grant me Eternal Life. Amen!

## I Can See Life's Miracles... If Only I Believe!

In 2 Kings 4:1-7 you will read about how Elisha helps a poor widow. It might not seem like a very important miracle, making one small jar of olive oil enough to fill many bottles, but for this poor widow it made all the difference. This woman who was about to lose everything was given olive oil, a very precious commodity, as it was the basic food for both rich and poor people. Elisha's miracle saved the woman's land and her sons. This is a miracle, God's power clearly present and acting as a sign of God's

care for the poor and powerless. It is also a perfect example of a miracle that happens when we allow ourselves to be used by God, to participate and make miracles happen.

Very often in Scripture, we read that the religious leaders demanded that Jesus perform a miracle to prove himself. But, even if Jesus *had* responded with

a miracle, they would not have attributed the results to God's healing power—for if you do not have faith, miracles are nothing more than bizarre circumstances and extraordinary events that defy explanation. You can see it either way, but for those of us who do believe, miracles are seen and understood through the prism of faith. Keep your eyes and heart open!

## **Our Armenian Way** *The Miracle of the Forty Martyrs*

The story of the Armenian people as they came to Christ is filled with miraculous events – apparitions, healings, encounters with angels and even Christ himself. One such renowned event took place in a remote garrison in Sebastia in the 4th century.

It was the winter of 316 A.D. The Roman emperor was Licinius and he had expanded his anti-Christian crusade, demanding that any Christians in the army would have to return to the pagan faith or be killed. It was soon discovered that in Sebastia an elite military unit of soldiers were Christian. They were from various cities of Lesser Armenia, and certainly some were assumed to be Armenian.

These forty youth were brought before the judge of the region and questioned. The soldiers confirmed that they were, indeed, Christians. Unafraid, they asserted that they were loyal to the emperor as evidenced by their success as soldiers, but that they also bore allegiance to their heavenly king and held fast to their Christian beliefs.

As brutal punishment, the soldiers were lined up to be stoned. However, as the first stone was hurled, a miraculous thing happened. The stone, instead of reaching its intended target, flew in exactly the opposite direction. When other Roman guards started throwing stones, they, too, were unable to harm the young Christian soldiers. Instead, their stones struck themselves.

After this terrifying experience, the brave, faithful young men were ordered to be taken to the lake near the city and spend the night in the frozen waters. Only if they renounced their faith and became pagans could they be spared. One of the forty soldiers broke away and abandoned his Christian faith; he fell dead as he reached the shore. The remaining 39 froze to death.

A second miraculous event occurred that night. Bright halos appeared and rested above the soldiers' heads. Moved by the experience, one of the guards declared himself a Christian and threw himself into the lake with the other martyred soldiers, bringing the number to 40 again. At dawn their bodies were removed from the lake; the Bishop of Sebastia had secretly arranged for the remains of the martyrs to be brought back to him in an effort to bring comfort and consolation to their families.

Shortly thereafter, a magnificent church with 40 bell towers was erected in memory of the soldiers. It was called the Church of the Forty Youths. The church was active until 1400 when the conqueror Tamerlane captured Sebastia and destroyed the city along with its 120,000 inhabitants. The church was finally entirely lost during the Genocide of 1915.

