

MIRACLES AND JESUS' PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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The significance of miracles in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth has been discussed frequently. Peter clearly saw the value of miracles in affirming the faith of the faithful. He described Jesus as "a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22; cf. 10:38). Later the Gospel writers referred to the significance of His miracles to both believers and unbelievers.¹ In modern times a number of interpreters agree that Jesus worked wonders,² but they remain divided on the sig-

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¹ The prominence of miracle stories in the Gospels is the best evidence for the significance of miracles to the authors. The Gospels record thirty-four miracles by Jesus. Fifteen texts of Jesus' ministry (e.g., Mark 1:32-34) refer to His miraculous deeds. Concerning just healings, Morton Kelsey contends almost one-fifth of the Gospels records Jesus' healings or discussions raised by them. He notes there is more Gospel data on physical transformation than on moral or spiritual transformation (*Healing and Christianity* [New York: Harper & Row, 1973], 53-54).

² Matthew 12:28 is the bedrock of critical scholarship's conclusions as to Jesus' miracle-working capabilities. Even Joachim Jeremias, who dismisses much of the Gospel miracles because of the "great powers of imagination of ancient man," concludes that the authenticity of Matthew 12:28 calls for some sort of extraordinary deeds by Jesus to make the charge of magic meaningful (*New Testament Theology*, trans. John Bowden [London: SCM, 1971], 88-91). Arguing the positive case for the authenticity of the miracle stories in general, A. E. Harvey (*Jesus and the Constraints of History* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982], 101, n. 15) cites the discussion by R. Latourelle, "Authenticite historique des miracles de Jesus," *Gregorianum* 54 (1973): 225-62.

External evidence for Jesus' miracles includes Josephus' description of Jesus as a Worker of paradoxical deeds (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 18.63 ff.), later rabbinic censure of Jesus as a "sorcerer who misled the people" (*b. Sanh.* 43a, cited by Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 98, and Pierre Grelot, "Les miracles de Jesus et la demonologie Juive," *Les Miracles de Jesus*, ed. Xavier Leon-Dufour [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977], 68), rabbinic prohibition of Jesus' name for use by their own exorcists (*t. Hul.* 2:22-23; *y. Sabb.* 14:4:14d; *y. Abod. Zar.* 2:2:40d—41a; b.

nificance of the miracles for what Jesus was seeking to do.³

In contrast to scholars who are critically selective of the Gospel data, this writer contends that the miracles of Jesus are revelatory deeds of the eschatological kingdom He preached and that in the Gospels they provoked people to make decisions regarding Him.

The Gospel writers knew little of modern notions of the "laws of nature" so that taking miracles as the abrogation or acceleration of such laws was not meaningful or necessary for them.⁴ From their perspective the miraculous deeds of Jesus and His disciples are defined more by their effect on those who witnessed them. The miracles were the extraordinary actions that evoked astonishment and awe in the people of first-century Palestine (Acts 2:22).⁵ The Synoptic Gospels naturally designate them therefore as evidences of *δυναμεις*. They were "mighty acts" and "manifestations of power."⁶

Abod. Zar. 27b, cited by Graham Twelftree, "ΕΙ ΔΕ . . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ," in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6: *The Miracles of Jesus*, ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg [Sheffield: JSOT, 1986], 367), and the use of Jesus' name in incantation formulae in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*. See B. L. Blackburn, "Miracles and Miracle Stories," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 556-57.

³ A sampling of recent offerings includes Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 98-120, for whom the miracles of Jesus are manifestations of an eschatological figure of the end-time; Morton Smith, for whom miracles confirm Jesus as a first-century magician who learned His trade in Egypt (*Jesus the Magician* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978]; cf. John M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* [Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1974]); Geza Vermes, who sees Jesus as a Galilean charismatic in the rabbinic traditions of Honi, the circle-drawer (*Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* [London: Collins, 1973]); John Dominic Crossan, who interprets Jesus' miracles as events intended to evoke the first-century peasant table-fellowship, which would ultimately be the basis of a peasant social movement (*The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992], 303—53); and Richard A. Horsley, who sees the miracles as actions of liberation against oppressive social, economic, religious, and political structures of the first century (*Jesus and the Spiral of Violence* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987], 181-90).

⁴ Therefore readers of the Gospels today need not contrive unnatural and unbiblical categories of miracle stories such as miracles of healing, or exorcism, or nature. In the view of the Gospel writers, each of these deeds had the same effect of evoking wonder in the witnesses, and each of them was the necessary result of Jesus' unified mission against the kingdom of Satan. For a helpful treatment of these questions and others about miracles see Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984). For his perspective on the definition of miracles see especially 290-92.

⁵ G. H. Boobyer, "The Gospel Miracles: Views Past and Present," in *The Miracles and the Resurrection* (London: SPCK, 1964), 32; Anton Vogtle, "The Miracles of Jesus against Their Contemporary Background," in *Jesus in His Time*, ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz, trans. Brian Watchorn (London: SPCK, 1971), 96-97.

⁶ Birger Gerhardsson, in *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew*, trans. Robert Dewsnap (Lund: Gleerup, 1979), 18.

WORD AND DEED IN JESUS' PRESENTATION
OF THE KINGDOM

The early church did not think of Jesus' miracles as mere tangents or appendages to His ministry. Peter, for example, told his audience in Acts 10:36 and 38 that they knew "the word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ . . . [and] how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." The preaching of peace was inherently accompanied with anointing for miracle-working power.

In the Gospels the relationship between word and deed is also clear. Matthew's summary statements in 4:23 and 9:35 point up Jesus' messianic activity in word and deed.⁷ Matthew and Luke referred to Jesus' ministry as both fulfilling the prophetic proclamations of Isaiah concerning the preaching of liberation and demonstrating liberation through miracles.⁸ Mark's first account of Jesus' ministry (1:21—27)⁹ shows the inherent interre-

⁷ Jesus went "teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). As H. Held observed nearly a generation ago, the strategic position of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) juxtaposed to the miracles in chapters 8 and 9 reveals Matthew's intention to show Jesus' mission as involving both word and deed ("Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963], 246. Also see Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew*, 23.

⁸ In Matthew 11:4-5, Jesus' response to the inquiry of John's disciples that they should go and report what they had heard and seen makes clear the fulfillment of Isaiah 35:5 in what they had seen of His miracles. What they had heard concerns the fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2--the gospel being preached to the poor (W. Grimm, *Weil Ich Dich Liebe. Die Verkündigung Jesu and Deuterojesaja* [Frankfurt: Lang, 1976], 129).

Isaiah 61:1-2 holds paradigmatic significance for Jesus' understanding of His ministry, as recorded in Luke. Jesus was in the synagogue reading and announcing His own fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2 (Luke 4:16-30). For Luke this announcement had reference to not only Jesus' proclamation of liberation and release, but also the previous demonstration of it by miraculous healings. When He spoke in the synagogue that Sabbath, He already had the reputation of being a miracle-worker. "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your home town as well'" (Luke 4:23). On the significance of Isaiah 61 for Luke, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 529; and George E. Rice, "Luke 4:31-44: Release for the Captives," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20 (Spring, 1982): 28.

⁹ The reaction of the audience to both Jesus' exorcism and His teaching in Mark 1:21-27 shows the close tie between His words and His deeds. In 1:22 the crowds were "amazed" (ἐξεπλήσθησαν) at His teaching and in 1:27 they were also "amazed" (ἐθαμβήθησαν) at His exorcism. While θαυμάζω is typically the term the Synoptics used to describe the impression people got of Jesus' healing activity, Mundle notes that the closely related ἐκπλήσθησαν in 1:22 renders "impossible any clear division between his acts and teaching" ("Miracle," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 2:623-24).

lationship of word and miracle and states that both miracles and parables expose spiritual blindness.¹⁰ So close is the connection between word and miracle in the Gospels, that many scholars do not hesitate to speak of miracles in "parabolic" terms. Richardson thinks of miracles as enacted or concrete parables, living examples of the content of Jesus' preaching.¹¹ Blomberg also speaks of the so-called nature miracles as depicting in symbol "the identical in-breaking kingdom, often with striking parallels in both imagery and significance to specific parables of Jesus."¹²

This close kinship of physical and verbal proclamation of the kingdom, however, does not mean His miracles have equal standing with His words as means of revelation. This is because miracles by nature are mute witnesses; they are dependent on words to explain their origin and meaning.¹³ This idea goes back to Deuteronomy 13:1-5, which states that a prophet's authenticity was tested not by his miraculous feats but by his word. Miracles were not required of true prophets. John the Baptist "performed no sign" (John 10:41), yet the people considered him a prophet of God (Matt. 21:26; Mark 11:32; Luke 20:6). The fact that one can do miracles is no guarantee of a true relationship to God (Matt. 7:21-23). Therefore it is no accident that Jesus' ministry began with His teaching.¹⁴ It is also not surprising that the miracles are

¹⁰ A parallel spiritual blindness to both Jesus' miracles and parables is noted in Mark 6:52 (cf. 8:21) and 4:13 (cf. 7:18). Confirming this is Blomberg's observation that Jesus used the same Old Testament passage, Isaiah 6:9–10, to rebuke the disciples mildly for their dullness after both a miracle (Mark 8:18) and a parable (4:11–12) (Craig L. Blomberg, "The Miracles as Parables," in *The Miracles of Jesus*, ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg [Sheffield: JSOT, 1986], 329)..

¹¹ Alan Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1941), 86; cf. James Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* (London: SPCK, 1961), 2.

¹² Blomberg, "The Miracles as Parables," 347. Blomberg argues for the specific parabolic content of the nature miracles. For example he says the fig tree miracle teaches the impending eschatological destruction of Israel (ibid., 332), and the transformation of water to wine teaches the purification and transformation of the Mosaic religion (ibid., 336). Raymond Brown echoes many of these sentiments ("The Gospel Miracles," in *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought*, ed. John L. McKenzie [New York: Herder and Herder, 1962], 190). Similar conclusions are presented by F. N. Davey ("Healing in the New Testament," in *The Miracles and the Resurrection* [London: SPCK, 1964], 52–53), and Colin Brown (*Miracles and the Critical Mind*, 316).

¹³ Albrecht Oepke, "ἰάματα" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 (1965): 212; cf. T'welftree, "ΕΙ ΔΕ . . . ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ," 387–88, and Gerhard Friedrich, "κηρύσσω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 (1965): 714.

¹⁴ This is not to say that miracles had no intrinsic value as signs or that the Pharisees were wrong in their request for a sign (Deut. 18:22), but the sign-value of miracles was certainly qualified by the accompanying proclamation.

more open to other interpretations in the Gospels (e.g., Matt. 12:24: "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons").¹⁵

MIRACLES AND THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

Jesus' miraculous demonstration of the kingdom of God cannot be separated from His proclamation of the kingdom. Therefore, like the parables and the other verbal means of communicating the kingdom, miracles have a revelatory function in the ministry of Jesus and the early church.

MIRACLES AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Matthew 12:28—"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God [Luke 11:20 has 'finger of God'], then the kingdom of God has come upon you"—establishes the connection between miracles (in this case exorcism) and the kingdom. It also establishes the means of the connection, namely, the Holy Spirit. Miracles are the Spirit's work in Jesus' life, and, as such, they continue an Old Testament pattern of Yahweh acting redemptively by the Spirit's miraculous power.

In the Old Testament the Spirit is "the medium through which God's presence in the midst of his people becomes a reality."¹⁶ Divine power was effected through certain individuals who were anointed with the Spirit, the result being prophetic utterance, and at times miracles.¹⁷ The same Spirit of Yahweh will also play a

¹⁵ See note 3. E. P. Sanders emphasizes the dilemma of unqualified miracles among the options in the first century. "Miracles were sufficiently common, sufficiently diverse, and sufficiently scattered among holy men, messianic pretenders, magicians and temples that we cannot draw firm inferences from them in order to explain what social type Jesus fits best or what his intention really was" (*Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 172).

¹⁶ Walther Eichrodt cites Psalm 106:33; Zechariah 7:12; Isaiah 34:16; 63:11ff.; and Haggai 2:5 (*Theology of the Old Testament*, trans J. A. Baker, 2 vols. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961], 2:61).

¹⁷ Max Turner ("The Spirit and the Power of Jesus' Miracles in the Lucan Conception," *Novum Testamentum* 33 [1991]: 124-52) uses the Septuagint here, Targum Jonathan at Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14, etc.; 2 Kings 2:15, and the Septuagint's πνεῦμα θεοῦ in Genesis 1:3 (versus the Targum "wind") to answer Eduard Schweizer's attempt ("πνεῦμα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6 [1968]: 407, 409) at positing a distinction in Judaism between the prophetic spirit and the power-source of miracles. By such distinction Schweizer tried to deny that the Spirit was the source of miracles in Luke's Gospel. In support of the more traditional view, Eichrodt notes that though the miracles of Moses and Elijah may not have been ascribed directly to the Spirit, they were ascribed to those who are acknowledged elsewhere as being mediators of the Spirit: Moses in Numbers 11:17, 25, and Elijah in 2 Kings 2:9, 15 (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:51, n. 7). He adds later that in the period of the Judges and prophetic portions of the Old Testament "the ruach is primarily nothing other than the supra-sensible causality of the

role in the New Covenant (Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:26-27), toward the end time when the Spirit will be poured out as the Cleanser and Renewer of God's people (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 18:31; 36:25-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-32). In addition the One specially anointed by the Spirit will rule as God's Servant during those times (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 48:16; 59:19-21; 61:1).¹⁸

The New Testament presentation of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry builds on this foundation of the Spirit's function in the Old Testament.¹⁹ He was conceived by the Spirit (Luke 1:35)—the divine Word united with the Spirit. At His baptism, He was designated God's Spirit-anointed Messenger destined to cleanse, judge, and baptize with the Spirit (Matt. 12:18).²⁰ His ministry in word and deed is a manifestation of the Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Acts 10:38),²¹ which is why rejection of the Spirit was the only issue of eternal consequence (Mark 3:28-29).²² His resurrection and exaltation crowned Him as the Lord of the Spirit (Acts 2:33). His kingdom is entered through an act of the Spirit (John 3:5, 8), and it is experienced through the Spirit (Rom. 14:17). The church is empowered to preach by the Spirit (Acts 1:8), and it works miracles through the Spirit (Rom. 15:18-19; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; Gal. 3:5; Heb. 2:2-4).²³

miraculous" (ibid., 52). He cites Gunkel (*Die Wirkungen des Geistes*, 1899) to say the operations of the Spirit lie first and foremost in the miraculous. Wonder-working established the authority of the prophet who was the mediator of the divine life's entrance into the world (ibid., 1:325, n. 3; 326). To Eichrodt's observations one could also add the fact that the Septuagint supplies "Spirit of the Lord" to numerous contexts that must be understood as miraculous (Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:14; cf. 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Ezek. 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 24; 37:1; 43:5).

¹⁸ On the Spirit in the last times see D. Wilhelm Michaelis, *Reich Gottes and Geist Gottes nach dem Neuen Testament* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, n.d.), 3–6; Erik Sjöberg, "irveiDua," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6 (1968): 384–86; and Eberhard Kamlah, "Spirit," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3:692.

¹⁹ See James D. G. Dunn, "Spirit and Kingdom," *Expository Times* 82 (1970–71): 36–40.

²⁰ See Colin Brown's case for the inauguration of Jesus' role as Spirit-baptizer occurring during His earthly ministry, not His heavenly one (*Miracles and the Critical Mind*, 301).

²¹ Cf. Luke's development of Jesus as a "prophet mighty in deed and word" (24:19).

²² D. Gerhard Dellling, "Das Verständnis des Wunders im Neuen Testament," *Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 24 (1955), 272–73.

²³ O'Reilly argues that the transfer of the prophetic spirit from Elijah to Elisha in 2 Kings 2:1-12 was paradigmatic for Luke's transfer of power from Jesus to His disciples at Pentecost. O'Reilly relies on the parallel of Sirach 48:12, which states "Elisha was filled with his spirit," and on Acts 2:4 along with Elijah's general significance as a type for Jesus in Luke (*Word and Sign in the Acts of the Apostles: A Study in Lucan Theology* [Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universaria; Gregoriana, 1987], 46–48). Richardson provides a summary of the Spirit and the New Testament church: "There is plentiful evidence that the early preaching of Christianity was

MIRACLES AND THE NEW AGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Miracles and Old Testament prophetic hope. Beyond Matthew 12:28 the Gospel writers went to great lengths to affirm Jesus' miracles as revelations of the promised New Age. The Spirit who worked miracles was present in Jesus, and the effects of that Spirit, namely, the miracles themselves, spoke of the arrival of the prophesied New Age. Jesus' healing the lame, deaf, and blind, and raising the dead (Matt. 11:5) are viewed as typical of the Gospel miracle accounts, clearly drawing from promises in Isaiah 26:19; 29:18; 35:4-7; 42:18; and 61:1-2.²⁴ In Mark 7:32, the word describing the deaf mute who was "hardly able to talk" (*μογιλάλον*) is a hapax legomenon found again in the Septuagint in Isaiah 35:6b: "the tongue of the dumb [*μογιλάλων*] will shout far joy." The release of his tongue from its "bond" (*δεσμὸς*, Mark 7:35) is prefigured by the release from oppressive bands predicted in Isaiah 58:6.²⁵ Jesus, who takes mankind's infirmities and carries away their sickness (Matt. 8:17, quoting Isa. 53:4a), and who "healed them all" (Matt. 12:15) is Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Matt. 12:18-21, quoting Isa. 42:1-4).²⁶

The fact that Jesus' miracles are oriented toward individuals and not the nation as a whole (like those of Moses) also unites Him with the eschatological hopes of the prophets who predicted a new age with only a whole people.²⁷ Gerhardsson has also noted Matthew's concern to present Jesus ministering in Jewish regions,²⁸ and particularly the region of Galilee, in fulfillment of

accompanied by miraculous powers, and that these powers were believed to be manifestations of the presence in the Church of the Holy Spirit, whose outpouring was regarded as the sign of the drawing nigh of the 'last days" (*Miracle—Stories of the Gospels*, 39-40).

²⁴ O. Betz and Werner Grimm, *Wesen and Wirklichkeit der Wunder Jesu* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1977), 31; and Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 115. Grimm notes from Mekh. 15:1 that the healings of Isaiah 35:5 (Matt. 11:5) were a messianic expectation among the rabbis (*Weil Ich Dich Liebe*, 127-28, n. 304). Healing the blind and the deaf was also thought to include spiritual blindness and deafness. Cf. the conclusions from Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud and Midrasch*, 2 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1969), 1:593-95.

²⁵ Betz and Grimm, *Wesen and Wirklichkeit*, 31, and 31, n. 39; Craig Blomberg, "Healing," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 302. Luke also said Jesus' exorcisms were like release from bondage (Luke 13:16).

²⁶ Held, "Matthew as Interpreter," 261-62. Held says Isaiah 53 is not about suffering or lowliness, but mighty works of power (*ibid.*, 262, n. 3).

²⁷ Betz and Grimm observe that individuals were not the focus of Old Testament healings until the prophecies of the coming age. Elijah is the notable exception, which possibly explains why Jesus was compared to him (Brown, "The Gospel Miracles," 185, n. 6).

²⁸ Matthew, for example, omitted Mark's mention of the effect in Tyre and Sidon of Jesus' ministry (Mark 3:1-8).

Isaiah 9:1-2 (Matt. 4:15-16). "The evangelist is most interested in illuminating Jesus' association with Galilee, The Messiah has visited his people."²⁹ Finally, the eschatological divine judgment of Micah 7:1-6 and Jeremiah 8:13 is prefigured in the cursing of the fig tree, and the abundance of the forthcoming Messiah feast (Isa. 25:6-9) is taught in the various gift-miracles (turning water into wine, feeding of the five thousand).³⁰

Miracles and the Sabbath. The prophesied coming age of salvation is also revealed by Jesus' many miracles. Several times the Gospel writers noted the Sabbath was the day when Jesus performed many miracles of exorcism or healing (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; 9:1-14). These occasional notations, plus Jesus' challenge to the synagogue official about the woman with the hemorrhage ("Should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" Luke 13:16), seem to demand some significance for the Sabbath day and Jesus' miracles.

Observance of the Sabbath day goes back to the Decalogue (Exod. 20:8-11), but its principle was also extended in Israel's observance of the Sabbath year (Deut. 15:2) and the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:13). In Isaiah, the year of Jubilee was any image associated with the eternal rest of the future age when all creation will be released from its captivity into the salvation of Yahweh (Isa. 58; 61:1-3).³¹ Jesus followed this eschatological theme of Jubilee when He proclaimed from Isaiah 61 that the "favorable year of the Lord" was being fulfilled in His teaching and healing ministry (Luke 4:16-21). Once again proclamation and deed in Jesus' ministry corroborate one another as His miracles prefigure the eternal rest and release sought for in the new sabbatical age.³²

²⁹ Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Mathew*, 36. The summary of Jesus' ministry "among the people" in Matthew 4:23 wad 9:35 is a specific reference to the Jewish people (ibid., 34, citing T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Mattheus* [Leipzig: Deichert, 1910], 4:23).

³⁰ See Blomberg, "The Miracles as Parables," passim.

³¹ R. B. Sloan, "Jubilee," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 396-97. Cf. also George W. Buchanan's discussion of sabbatical theology in Israel in *The Consequences of the Covenant* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 1-15. The year of Jubilee as an eschatological theme is also found in Daniel 9:24-27 and the noncanonical Jubilees 1:21—25. The writings of the Qumran community also confirm this interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-2 (11Q Melchizedek; Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3d ed. [London: Penguin, 1987], 300), but that community saw Melchizedek as the messianic figure who would come and establish "the favorable year of the Lord" (M. P. Miller, "The Function of Is 61:1-2 in 11Q Melchizedek," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 [1969]: 467—69).

³² The eschatological meaning of Jesus' Sabbath healings is a matter of some dispute. Some scholars see the meaning coming primarily from the occasion of the first Sabbath when God rested after His creative work. The New Age would be the

Miracles and divine mercy. Because Yahweh's salvation was restorative and liberating for His covenant people, the prophets naturally anticipated it as the supreme expression of His lovingkindness and mercy (רַחֲמֵי).³³ Yahweh's favor was guaranteed by His commitment under the covenant. His רַחֲמֵי meant pardoning grace as well as faithful and merciful aid to His people. His covenantal sort was inherently active. Thus miracles from the wonder-working prophets were viewed as expressions of the succoring hand of Yahweh (1 Kings 17:16–24; 2 Kings 4:1–7; 7:7–2).³⁴ Based on this faithful action³⁵ the prophets portrayed the coming age as the time when Yahweh's ultimate רַחֲמֵי (cf. Isa. 54:8; 55:3; Mic. 7:20) and compassion (רַחֲמֵי; Isa. 14:1; 49:13; 54:7; Jer. 12:15; 33:26; Ezek. 39:25; Mic. 7:19; Zech. 1:16) would be revealed.

The New Testament follows up on this idea in such a way that Christ's First Advent is understood as the expression of God's mercy to humanity (Titus 3:5), but Jesus' miracles are a particular demonstration of God's lovingkindness. Based on God's commitment to the covenant, His mercy issues forth in tangible action to fulfill the messianic mandate of proclaiming and enacting righteousness.³⁶ The miracles are particular and neces-

time when Yahweh would work again and create a new world. Jesus' Sabbath miracles then should be seen as the recreative acts of the new salvation time. Raymond Brown expresses this view, saying the Sabbath miracle "was primarily to emphasize [Jesus'] miraculous work as a renewed creativity. God had rested from the work of the first creation on the sabbath; now he had resumed his creative work as he established his dominion, saved man from Satan, and re-created him in his own image" ("The Gospel Miracles," 188). Also Hendrickx sees a creative act in Mark 7:37, in which a Sabbath miracle evoked the statement from bystanders, "He has done all things well," in apparent reflection of the benediction to God's creative work in Genesis 1 (Herman Hendrickx, *The Miracle Stories* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987], 13). Grimm and Betz and Davey see Jesus' healings on the Sabbath as demonstrations of the final rest anticipated in the eschatological jubilee. For them the creative aspect of Jesus' miracles articulated by Brown does not uniquely explain the significance of the Sabbath occasion. All Jesus' miracles of healing and exorcism are creative and restorative acts. They are all His and the Father's works (John 5:19), but the special mention of the Sabbath presents specificity to the rest and release Jesus' miracles gave those who were healed (e.g., the woman freed from her bonds on the Sabbath, Luke 13:16). The focus is not so much on the fact that Yahweh works again, but on the rest provided as a result of His work (Grimm, *Weil Ich Dich Liebe*, 98-99; Betz and Grimm, *Wesen and Wirklichkeit der Wunder Jesu*, 34-35; 35, n. 50; and Davey, "Healing in the New Testament," 54).

³³ R. Bultmann, "ἔλεος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2 (1964): 479-87.

³⁴ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:325.

³⁵ Bultmann notes *Ion* is not primarily a disposition, but "the act or demonstration of assisting faithfulness" (ἔλεος, 480).

³⁶ Righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) is the appropriate fulfillment of a covenant relationship and therefore is related to mercy (ἔλεος). The end-time expectation of messianic righteousness was complete satisfaction and enjoyment of the covenant.

sary expressions of God's covenant commitment and promise for the future. The idea of the in-breaking of divine love and kindness in the kingdom without appropriate changes in the physical well-being of people was impossible under the righteous demands of covenant-mercy.³⁷ Therefore the Gospel writers often noted Jesus' covenant-mercy (ἔλεος) as the motivation behind His miraculous deeds (e.g., Matt. 9:13; 20:30, 34).³⁸ His miracles were not simply proofs for belief; "they were rather the natural reaction of his spirit to sickness and suffering in the world and his desire for God's grace to be known in those he touched."³⁹

MIRACLES AND THE KINGDOM OF SATAN

The Old Testament promise of the final Sabbath rest and the presence of God's eschatological **ἩΡΑ** in the kingdom, necessitated the destruction of the forces opposed to the divine order (Isa. 29:20; 33:14; 61:2). All blessings of the age to come will follow after the people's enemies are subjugated. Isaiah told the captives they could not be freed unless the mighty man is first subdued and Yahweh "contends with the one who contends with you" (Isa. 49:24-25). In the Gospels, Jesus' role as the One who contends with the enemy of Yahweh's people is the fundamental drama of His ministry. Its importance to the complete picture of Jesus' miracles and proclamation of the kingdom cannot be overstated.⁴⁰

Without doubt Jesus came to make "open war on the reign of Satan."⁴¹ In Matthew and Luke it is significant that the drama of

See G. Schrenk, "δικαιοσύνη," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2 (1964): 195; and Gunther Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and the Church in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. Gunther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz J. Held (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

³⁷ O. Betz, "Heilung," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), 14:766.

³⁸ Held, "Matthew as Interpreter," 263.

³⁹ Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, 99.

⁴⁰ On Jesus' ministry as confrontation with the kingdom of Satan see Kailas, *Significance of the Synoptic Miracles*, 78ff.; Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 114; Brown, "The Gospel Miracles," 187; Grimm, *Weil Ich Lich Liebe*, 88-93; H. C. Kee, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," *New Testament Studies* 14 (1967-1968): 232-46; idem, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 156-70; Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 92; Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew*, 33; Philippe Menoud ("La Signification du miracle selon le Nouveau Testament," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 28-29 [1948-1949]: 176-79; Grelot, "Les Miracles de Jesus," 68-70; Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 284; Rudolf Pesch, *Jesus Ureigene Taten?* (Freiburg: Herder, 1970), 151-55; and Hendrickx, *The Miracle Stories*, 25-28.

⁴¹ Franz Mussner, *The Miracles of Jesus*, trans. Albert Wimmer (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1968), 43.

Pre-Christian sources for the eschatological warfare of Yahweh and His enemies come predominantly from the intertestamental period. Often thought to be a

Jesus' ministry opens in conflict with Satan in His temptations (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-12). In Mark 1:23-28 exorcism follows soon after the programmatic declaration of the kingdom's advent. The cries of the demons, "Have You come to destroy us?" (Luke 4:34; Mark 1:24), are naturally understood as tokens of the conflict. The connection between the kingdom of God and exorcism is made more explicit in Matthew 12:28, which, as already seen, brings together the Holy Spirit, the kingdom, and exorcism. Luke also revealed the kingdom's nexus with exorcism in the account of the ministry of the seventy (Luke 10:18). In Luke 13:82, Jesus summarized His whole ministry before the Cross in reference to exorcism and healing: "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal."

The cosmic dimensions of the conflict are underscored by the New Testament's presumption that every malady and disorder of the creation was ultimately rooted in the chaos of Satan's kingdom. For example, though sickness in the Old Testament was the result of sin,⁴² Jesus understood illness as being related to Satan as well. The sick woman of Luke 13 was one "whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years" (13:16).⁴³ In Matthew the lines between disease and demons blur as *θεραπεύειν* ("to heal") speaks of both healing diseases and casting out demons (4:24; 10:8).⁴⁴ Jesus' rebuke (*ἐπιτιμῶ*) of the storm (Mark 4:37-41) was the same

relatively late development in Judaism (depending on one's dating of Daniel; see Adolf von Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. and ed. James Moffatt [reprint, New York: Books for Libraries, 1972], 155; and Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*, 155), spiritual warfare of the same caliber as the New Testament reached a zenith in these centuries just before Christianity. During this period the antagonism between Satan and his agents and God and His agents developed in intensity and specificity from the Old Testament. Josephus, for example, reported unusual legends of the Jews about Solomon's great learning that enabled him to defeat demonic powers in exorcism (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 8.45). In works such as 1 Enoch 10:11-15, 54-55; Testament of Levi 18:12; Testament of Moses 10:1-2; Testament of Asher 7:3; and Benjamin 3:3, the advent of the kingdom of God means the end of Satan and his unholy reign during this age. There will be cataclysmic and cosmic upheaval as the supernatural minions of the evil one do battle with the Messiah and His forces. The earth of the devil goes through its final throes before the messianic reign of peace begins. The priestly sect at Qumran had similar exegesis of the Old Testament prophetic hope. In 11Q Melchizedek, Isaiah 61 is exegeted according to the dualistic worldview of the other apocalyptic writers, which connected exorcism, the kingdom of God, and the anointing of the Spirit (See Grimm, *Weil Ich Dich Liebe*, 97).

⁴² See Brown's discussion in "The Gospel Miracles," 187-88.

⁴³ Kallas argues a similar case for Mark 3:10; 5:29, 34; and Luke 7:21, in which the Greek word for disease (*μῶστιξ*) also means "whip" or "scourge." He puts this forth as a possible link between physical sickness and the devil's oppression of his subjects (Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles*, 79).

⁴⁴ Noted by Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew*, 33.

as His rebuke of demons (Mark 1:25), which was the same as His rebuke of illness (Luke 4:39).⁴⁵ Finally, Jesus conquered the last weapon of Satan, namely, death. Death is the ultimate enemy and stands in the ultimate position in Jesus' summary of His liberating miracles in Matthew 11:5. For John the resurrection of Lazarus marks the climax of Jesus' ministry before His own death and resurrection.⁴⁶ Thus by His miracles Jesus waged war on many fronts against a hostile force.

MIRACLES AND PURITY

Three specific points of contact call for consideration of the subject of purity. First, Jesus' miracles of exorcism necessarily brought the "holy" Spirit in contact with "unclean." spirits (e.g., Mark 1:21–28), which were the ultimate source of all impurity.⁴⁷ Second, the primary subjects of Jesus' miracles were those deemed "unclean" in His day.⁴⁸ Third, according to His enemies, Jesus' ministry to the unclean compromised His own purity by the standards of His day.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Grimm sees the divine rebuke in the Gospel exorcism accounts as going back to the Old Testament tradition of the powerful words of Yahweh commanding order from chaos at the creation (*Weil Ich Dich Liebe*, 110; cf. Isa. 50:2; 51:9–10; 54:9). Paul and Peter both referred to nature as affected by sin (Rom. 8:22; 2 Pet. 3:12–13).

⁴⁶ For Paul, death is the last enemy (1 Cor 15:26). For the first Christians Jesus' victory over death was the critical blow to Satan's kingdom (Acts 2:32–33, 36; 5:31). See Brown, "The Gospel Miracles," 188–89.

⁴⁷ Demons themselves were thought to be unclean by their association with corpses and graves as well as their personal immorality (Friedrich Hauck, "ἀκάθαρτος, ἀκαθαρσία," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 [1965]: 428). The source of all impurity in general was thought to be their destructive working against God's will (Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: Aspects of Ritual in Ancient Israel* [1974], cited by Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* [Leiden: Brill, 1973], 8).

⁴⁸ Gerhard Dellling ("Botschaft and Wunder im Wirken Jesu," *Der historische Jesus and der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. Helmut Ristow and Karl Matthias [Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961], 397) notes that it is no mere coincidence that Jesus healed the blind, the lame, and lepers as well as eating with tax gatherers and sinners, given the purity system as evidenced in Josephus (*The Jewish Wars* 6.425–27), Qumran (1QSa 2:3–9; the Temple Scroll 11QT 1, and the rabbinic materials (Menachoth 9:8). Neusner summarizes Josephus on the classes prohibited from the temple: foreigners; those with gonorrhoea; menstruating women; anyone unclean by contact with a corpse; lepers; and men not thoroughly clean from other defect (*The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, 41).

⁴⁹ Some examples in Mark's account are these: Jesus touched lepers (1:41); He was touched by the woman with the issue of blood (5:25–29); He entered the house where a girl lay dead (5:35–43); He touched her corpse (5:35–43); He healed a Gentile (7:24–30); He used spittle in healing (7:31–36; 8:22–26); He healed on the Sabbath (1:29–31; 3:1–6); and He fellowshiped with the unclean (2:15–17; 8:1–10). For a more complete enumeration of Jesus "offenses," see David Rhoads, "Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries," in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*,

It is difficult to overestimate the impact the purity system had on the religious life and culture of Israel in the first century. Ideas of purity and impurity are woven as deeply into the fabric of life then as was the dualism that saw everything in terms of the conflict between God's kingdom and Satan's.⁵⁰ The source of Israel's ideas of purity was ultimately the holiness of Yahweh as set forth in the Mosaic law: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (e.g., Lev. 19:2).⁵¹ From this standard the Israelites gained and maintained boundaries that regulated and protected the cosmological, social, and personal aspects of their lives.⁵² The cosmological boundaries in Israel were the ones that distinguished and protected the holiness of God from defilement. These boundaries governed human approach to God and kept God from withdrawing His presence. They are the basis of all that was clean and unclean, and they were centered around the temple where God dwelt on the earth. The prodigious practical impact of all uncleanness, therefore, was that one was denied entrance to the temple and shut off from the center of Israel's life.⁵³ The sociological boundaries were essentially the cosmological ones realized horizontally. The sanctity of what happened in the temple

ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 149–50; and Stephen Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority* (Lund: Gleerup, 1978), 67–69.

⁵⁰ Neusner notes that purity was an "essential element" in the interpretation of the culture of Israel from 1000 B.C. to A.D. 600 (*The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, 28). In the twentieth century there has been debate as to the importance of ritual purity in the second temple period. Buehler argued that only a few priests observed high level ritual purity (*Der galilaische 'Am-ha 'Ares des zweiten Jahrhunderts* [1906]). Scholarship, however, is moving against this position on the strength of G. Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, trans. Israel Abraham (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1977), 146–89, 190–234. See Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, x; and Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, 62–65.

⁵¹ Mary Douglas argues convincingly that holiness, defined as separateness and completeness, is the basis for everything that is categorized clean and unclean in the Levitical law. The issue is not hygiene, aesthetics, separation from pagan practices, nor simply divine whim, but orderliness and conformity to class (*Purity and Danger* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966], 40–51).

⁵² See Rhoads, "Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries," 152–54; and Jacob Milgrom, "Purity and Impurity," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 13:1405–14.

⁵³ On the significance of the temple, Neusner states, "The Temple supplied to purity its importance in the religious life. As the Temple signified divine favor, and as the cult supplied the nexus between Israel and God, so purity, associated so closely to both, could readily serve as an image of either divine favor or man's loyalty to God. From that fact followed the assignment of impurity to all that stood against the Temple, the cult, and God: idolatry first of all" (*The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, 15). Neusner adds later, "All rites of purification aimed at one goal: to permit participation in the cult" (*ibid.*, 118). Also see Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 152.

was what separated Jews from Gentiles, and these boundaries came to be the means of keeping Gentiles out.⁵⁴ The bodily "boundary" of an individual was his or her skin. Personal purity was violated by the presence outside the body of what normally should be inside. Breaks in the skin, issues of blood, or semen made one unclean.

In the first century the Sadducees and the Pharisees were two sects that enforced the purity of worship and the temple.⁵⁵ Anyone who violated this purity standard and therefore threatened the temple would naturally be confronted by them. Considered in this light, it is easier to understand the prominence of these groups in the miracles stories and also their antagonism. In their view, Jesus' disregard for purity where His miracles were concerned (see notes 48 and 49) was an assault on the temple and God Himself. Of course many other incidents in Jesus' ministry were offensive to the temple, in their opinion,⁵⁶ but the violation of purity in the miracles raises an issue regarding the kingdom of God. How does the kingdom interface with the purity system of Israel? Do the miracles demonstrate anything about Jesus' understanding of purity where the kingdom of God is concerned?

Berger discusses the interface of purity, kingdom, and miracles in Jesus' "offensive holiness," as he calls it.⁵⁷ Berger shows that while Jesus and the early Christians had much in common with first-century Pharisees, particularly in the belief that purity was the fundamental eschatological problem,⁵⁸ their views on the relationship of purity to impurity differed. Purity for the Phar-

⁵⁴ Rhoads, "Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries," 153. The New Testament picture of Gentile impurity (Acts 10:28; 11:3; Gal. 2:12–13) may not have been a strong tenet of ancient Israel, but was a pervasive and long-held view of Judaism by the first century (Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, 65). The early Halakah condemned association with non-Jews on the grounds that idols and their attendants were unclean (Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World*, 147–48).

⁵⁵ Of these two, the Pharisees were the more strict in their observance of purity rites. The ground of their identity as a distinct sect was their belief that temple purity rites were normative beyond the priesthood. Their particular views here were manifested in daily life around the taking of meals, which was supposed to be done in a state of ritual purity and only with others of similar "pure" status, and the careful giving of tithes and offerings. For a concise summary of what is known of first-century P'harisaism, see Klaus Berger, "Jesus als Pharisaer and Friihe Christen als Pharisaer," *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988): 231–37.

⁵⁶ Jesus assaulted the temple in His teaching (e.g., Mark 14:58: "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands") and in His prophetic actions ("cleansing" the temple, Mark 11:15–17).

⁵⁷ Berger, "Jesus als Pharisaer and Fruhe Christen als Pharisaer," 240–41.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 239. See for example the metaphors of cleansing in John's prophecy of Jesus' ministry in Luke 3:16–17.

isees was a matter of defense; it was a hedge, a means of protection against being contaminated by what was impure. It demanded separation from the polluted. Purity was something fragile and vulnerable.

Jesus, on the other hand, demonstrated an offensive holiness "that is not threatened or damaged by impurity, it is not a passive quality only to be established, which is liable to pollution and always needs to be protected."⁵⁹ Armed with the holy power of the kingdom He represented (i.e., the Holy Spirit), Jesus crossed the boundaries of the purity, reached into the realm of the unclean, and instead of being polluted Himself, He made others pure. Jesus showed that the purity of the kingdom is not in danger from anything outside the individual. Purity of the kingdom is something far more penetrating; purity is an issue of the heart (Matt. 15:1-3, 25-28; Mark 7:15). This is why Jesus' healings were an outward sign of the forgiveness of sin offered from God (Mark 2:1-12; John 5:14).⁶⁰ Jesus, as Bearer of the purity of the kingdom, made the external condition clean without suffering pollution Himself, and He went beyond that and healed the heart. The issue of the heart was why the purity of temple worship came up short and received Jesus' condemnation. On the one hand external observance may too easily overshadow demands God makes on the heart; on the other hand external demands are too simple a criterion for judging the heart.⁶¹ So the kingdom is inherently oriented toward purity, but it is a purity that operates in the deepest regions of the human heart,⁶² and Jesus' miracles are indirect testimony to that fact.

This discussion about the nature of the kingdom as revealed by Jesus' miracles, including their Old Testament prophetic antecedents, their occasion (viz., on the Sabbath), and their objects (viz., the impure), point up three facts about the kingdom. Eschatologically, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic hope for Israel. Soteriologically, in the kingdom there will ultimately be rest, restoration, liberation, deliverance, and redemption for all God's creation. Physically, Jesus' miracles of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 240.

⁶⁰ Betz, "Heilung," 14:766.

⁶¹ Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, 91; cf. idem, "Clean and Unclean," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 126-28; and Rhoads, "Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries," 155-59.

⁶² Paul wrote about the kingdom and purity: "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean" (Rom. 14:14), and "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (v. 17).

human needs point toward a physical fulfillment of the Old Testament promises for human society, including national promises for Israel. The miracles show that the kingdom has a physical side; Old Testament promises to Israel will not be fulfilled only in the spiritual realm. Just as miracles show that the lame and the blind experienced a physical restoration, so the promises to national Israel ought not be spiritualized.

MIRACLES AND THE INAUGURATOR OF THE KINGDOM

Another element of the kingdom revealed by the miracles was the messianic identity of the Miracle-worker. In the Gospel of John especially there can be no doubt that miracles serve this Christological function (John 2:11; 4:53; 6:14; 7:31; 9:38; 11:4, 15, 45; 12:11; 20:30; cf. Matt. 14:22-33 and Mark 6:47-56). The miracles in the Gospels first confirm the message of God's in-breaking rule and then reveal the identity of the messianic Ruler.⁶³ They are first eschatological and soteriological and then Christological, despite the subsequent reversal of this paradigm in the church's later apologetics.⁶⁴ Given that Jesus' miracles did have some Christological and apologetic significance in the New Testament, the question may be raised whether this significance was a product of the Gospel writers, or whether miracles were legitimate messianic credentials of the first century. Was the Messiah expected to be a Miracle-worker?

EXTRACANONICAL WITNESSES

Any discussion of the Messiah in the first century must traverse the murky waters of Jewish eschatological beliefs before Christianity. Recent studies have shown that in pre-Christian times there was less uniformity in the expectations of "the Messiah" than has usually been thought.⁶⁵ In the first place scholars

⁶³ Delling, "Botschaft and Wunder," 393-95; idem, "Das Verstandnis des blunders," 275; Boobyer, "The Gospel Miracles," 42; Brown, "The Gospel Miracles," 186-87. Whether asked by the devil, Herod, the Pharisees, or the crowds, Jesus refused to do miracles for His own credentials (Matt. 4:5; 12:38-42; Mark 6:1-6; 8:11-13; 15:31-32; Luke 23:6-12).

⁶⁴ Colin Brown details the church's heavy use of the miracles in defense of Jesus' identity (*Miracles and the Critical Mind*, 3-20). Cf. Eric R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 124-25. Similarly, Brown notes how this apologetic function of miracles is overemphasized ("The Gospel Miracles," 186).

⁶⁵ See James H. Charlesworth, "The Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha," in *Aufstieg and Niedergang der Romischen Welt* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979), 19.1.188-218; Russell, *Method and Message*, 308-9; and Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 88-92. Horsley and Hanson note also how the term

are now seeing intertestamental Judaism as a complex and richly varied phenomenon that had no orthodox center before A.D. 70.⁶⁶ In the second place, given the breadth and history of the term itself, there is serious doubt "Messiah" was used as a specific title in the intertestamental literature.⁶⁷ Third, when the royal anointed figure does show up in the literature, his appearance is a notably secondary element of the apocalyptic hope and somewhat amorphous in the details.⁶⁸

Many scholars deny that this eschatological royal figure was expected to work miracles. It is ironic that much of this verdict is founded on post-A.D. 70 rabbinic literature, which may be characterized as somewhat anticharismatic,⁶⁹ anti-Christian,⁷⁰ and in most cases at least a century too late. Still, Delling maintains this conclusion from the silence of Judaism for a miracle-working Messiah, as reported in the studies of Strack and Billerbeck.⁷¹ The editors of Schurer's *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* back up their view with Klausner's famous statement that "the Messiah is never mentioned anywhere in the Tannaitic literature as a wonder-worker per se."⁷²

"Messiah" has been synthesized into one monolithic category under the weight; of Christian theology.

⁶⁶ The Tannaitic works representing orthodoxy in Judaism are dated one or two centuries after A.D. 70, thereby giving some credence to Charlesworth's conclusion that "Judaism did not flow unilaterally and without development from the first century B.C. to the third century A.D." ("The Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha," 194).

⁶⁷ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, 90. Horsley and Hanson observe that the term "Messiah," meaning "an anointed one," was used for prophets and priests as well as kings (cf. Russell, *Method and Message*, 304-7). Charlesworth cites the studies of M. de Jonge ("The Use of the Word 'Anointed' in the Time of Jesus," *Novum Testamentum* 8 [1966]: 132-48) and Morton Smith ("Messiahs: Robbers, Jurists, Prophets, and Magicians," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 44 [1977]: 185-95) to caution against careless use of the term for only an eschatological royal figure (idem, "The Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha," 196, n. 22). Smith notes that in the pseudepigraphical literature of that time "there were both messiahs without ends of the world and ends of the world without messiahs" (Ibid.).

⁶⁸ References to an eschatological Messiah are missing altogether from the Apocrypha. The "Messiah," the "Anointed One," or the "Christ" are mentioned in only five of the other Jewish pseudepigraphical documents. As to the difference of details one need only consider the Melchizedekian Messiah of Qumran (11Q Melchizedek), the Levitical Messiah of the Hasmoneans, and the prevailing notions of the Davidic Messiah.

⁶⁹ See Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 80-82.

⁷⁰ Cf. the curses in the Eighteen Benedictions and the portrayal of Jesus as a sorcerer.

⁷¹ "Der Verstandnis des Wunders," 274, n. 18. Pesch also agrees with Delling (*Jesu Ureigene Taten?* 151).

⁷² Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC-35 AD)*, rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black, 3 vols.

In addition to the questionable foundation of these opinions, several points can be raised that present the subject in a different light. First, in accord with the Old Testament the intertestamental literature did affirm the messianic age as a miraculous time. In fact miracles are quite the norm. Second Baruch 72, for example, gives a full litany of miraculous blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, characterizing it as the time when "joy shall then be revealed, and rest shall appear. And then healing shall descend in dew, and disease shall withdraw."⁷³

Second, from His secondary role in the apocalyptic dramas the Messiah is often not in view where the implementation of these blessings is concerned. God is the main figure of the apocalyptic kingdom and the writers have little need of a human Messiah.⁷⁴ Sometimes when the Messiah does appear, it is only after God has already acted (e.g., 1 Enoch 90). The Messiah has a predominantly passive status. Russell concludes that the emphasis in these works is "not so much on the Messiah and his ushering in of the kingdom as it is on the kingdom itself as a mighty act of God."⁷⁵ However, nothing of the intertestamental period expressly states the Messiah figure would not work miracles.

Third, one allusion in the rabbinic materials, cited by Bammel,⁷⁶ implies the necessity of the Messiah working miracles. In Threni R. ad Lam 2:2, Rabbi Akiba is reported as believing in the messiahship of Bar Kochba on account of his miracles.⁷⁷ Nicol attempts to discredit this by noting that miracles were not widely reported of Bar Kochba,⁷⁸ but even if the story was invented, it remains that the Messiah was expected to do miracles.

Fourth, it may be justified to broaden the scope of the inquiry

(Edinburgh: Clark, 1973-87), 2:525, n. 42; and Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, trans. W. F. Stinespring (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 506.

⁷³ Quoted in Charlesworth, "The Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha," 201. The Targums (Tg Is 53:8) also expect many miracles in the day of the Messiah (Betz, "Heilung," 14:766).

⁷⁴ Russell, *Method and Message*, 309; and Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, 524.

⁷⁵ Russell, *Method and Message*, 309-10.

⁷⁶ E. Bammel, "John Did No Miracle," in *Miracles*, ed. C. F. D. Moue (London: Mowbray, 1965), 188-89.

⁷⁷ "Rabbi Shimon Ben Yohai taught: Akiba, my master, was interpreting, A star (כוכב) stepped forth from Jacob (Num 24:17): Cozbah (כזב) stepped forth from Jacob. When Rabbi Akiba saw Cozbah, he said, 'He is the messianic king!'" (J Taanit IV.68d, in *Revelation and Redemption: Jewish Documents of Deliverance from the Fall of Jerusalem to the Death of Nahmanides*, intro., trans., and notes by George Wesley Buchanan [Dillsboro, NC: Western Carolina, 1978], 174).

⁷⁸ W. Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 80, n. 1.

to include themes inherent to the working of miracles—like the possession of prophetic power. Though possessing the spirit of prophecy did not guarantee that one could work miracles, all legitimate miracles did come from it.⁷⁹ If the Messiah did possess the prophetic Spirit, at least the necessary mechanism for doing miracles would be present. The question here would be, Does the intertestamental literature see messianic figures as the bearers of God's prophetic Spirit?

The Psalms of Solomon point in the right direction when it describes the Messiah in terms of divine power.

And gird him with might to defeat unrighteous rulers, to purify Jerusalem of the heathen who trample it to destruction. . . . God has made him strong in the Holy Spirit and wise in counsel with power and righteousness. And the good pleasure of the Lord is with him in strength and he will not be weak . . . strong is he in his works and might in the fear of God.⁸⁰

Besides the implicit opening this statement gives to the possibility of a wonder-working Messiah who is "strong in the Holy Spirit," Nicol has attempted to make the case more explicit through the Moses-Messiah typology of the intertestamental period.⁸¹ He contends that as Moses was a great prophet and liberator, all the expectations of the Messiah as a second Moses would naturally assume the Messiah was anointed with the same prophetic Spirit. The office of the prophet is joined to that of king by way of second-Moses typology.⁸² Along the same lines Josephus wrote of several messianic figures of the first century who not only claimed to be prophets but also appeared to follow the Moses-Messiah typology in

⁷⁹ There was a significant connection between prophets/prophecy and attestation by miracles. See, for example, the appeal to a miracle as a test to a prophet's message in Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 8:408. Anita Bingham Kolenkow says that for Jews the "major motif is proof of prophecy by miracle-sign" ("Relationship between Miracle and Prophecy in the Greco-Roman World and Early Christianity," in *Aufstieg and Niedergang der Römische Welt* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980], 23.2.1471).

⁸⁰ Psalms of Solomon 17:24, 42-43, 47 (cited by W. Grundmann, "δύναμαι," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2 [1964]: 299).

⁸¹ Moses was a popular if not official antitype for the end-time Messiah. He was Israel's first deliverer and the Messiah will be her last. On the prominence of the Moses and Messiah typology in the intertestamental period, Joachim Jeremias says it "was very much alive in the NT period and repeatedly exercised a decisive influence on the course of events" ("Μωυσῆς," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4 [1969]: 863). Cf. Barnett, "Jewish Sign Prophets," 682-83; and Blackburn, "Miracles," 558.

⁸² Nicol, *The Semeia of the Fourth Gospel*, 83-86. To a lesser degree a similar case could be made for an Elijah and Messiah typology in the intertestamental period, though the Elijah figure was usually seen as the forerunner of the Messiah, not the Messiah Himself. See Joachim Jeremias, "Ἡλ(ε)ίας," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2 (1964): 931.

their actions.⁸³

In the intertestamental literature a miracle-working Messiah is not explicitly affirmed, but He is also never explicitly denied. However, there does seem to be evidence of a general expectation that the Messiah's age would be miraculous, that those miracles would be effected through the prophetic Spirit, and that the Messiah would be anointed with that same Holy Spirit. So, though the Messiah is not spoken of in the intertestamental literature as performing miracles, the lacunae could be accounted for on other grounds, and there is nothing inherently incompatible with a miracle-working Messiah in the pre-Christian hopes of Judaism.⁸⁴

NEW TESTAMENT WITNESSES

As already noted, Jesus' messianic identity was revealed by His miracles. Though Old Testament prophets did not need to perform miracles, miracles could serve to attest the authenticity of their message. The New Testament makes a concerted effort to affirm Jesus' prophetic office by miracles. For example according to Philo's contention that the forecast of a prophet's own death was the prophet's greatest proof,⁸⁵ Jesus predicted His own death on numerous occasions (e.g., Mark 8:31; 10:32-34). Also there is little doubt the crowds considered Jesus a prophet because of His miracles (Mark 6:14–16; Luke 7:14–17; John 6:14). Jesus attributed His own inability to heal in His hometown to the fact that "a prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household" (Mark 6:4).

Luke especially seems to have portrayed Jesus as a prophet, but most notably as a prophet like Moses.⁸⁶ Similar to the intertestamental Moses typology, which said the Messiah would be a

⁸³ The Antiquities of the Jews 20.97, 167–69. The parallel to Moses is seen in their drawing their followers into the wilderness, and, to a lesser degree their performance of miracles like Moses (Jeremias, "Μωυσηης," 4:861-62).

⁸⁴ Rudolf Bultmann makes a similar conclusion (*The Gospel of John*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 306, n. 3).

⁸⁵ Kolenkow, "Relationship between Miracle and Prophecy," 1494–95, citing Philo, Moses 2:290.

⁸⁶ Turner says Luke's concern to portray Jesus as the Mosaic Prophet and the church as the true disciples of Moses "is a concern which is central to Luke's whole purpose in writing" ("The Spirit and the Power of Jesus' Miracles," 146, n. 59). He cites agreement from R. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke Acts* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1982); D. L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); D. Juel, *Luke-Acts* (London: SCM, 1983); and R. L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology and Conciliation* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987). Cf. Barnett, "Jewish Sign Prophets," 691, and O'Reilly, *Sign and Word*, 180, n. 68.

redeeming prophet, the disciples on the Emmaus Road spoke of their hope in Jesus, whom they considered a prophet and Israel's Redeemer (Luke 24:19-21). Several commentators have observed the connection between the crowd's adulation of Jesus as a prophet for raising the dead (Luke 7:14-16) and the prompt question from John about Jesus' possible messianic connections (vv. 19-22).⁸⁷ Twice in Acts 1-12 Jesus is considered "the prophet" like Moses (Acts 3:22-23; 7:37). Stephen's sermon in particular seems to draw parallels between Jesus and Moses in their rejection (Moses: 7:25, 35, 39; Jesus: 7:51) and their function as redeemers (v. 35) and workers of signs and wonders (v. 36).⁸⁸

Jesus' miracles also resembled those of the prophets Elijah and Elisha.⁸⁹ At the beginning of His ministry Jesus indicated that their deeds are parallel to His own ministry as the anointed Herald of the gospel (Luke 4:16-27). The quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19 grounds His ministry in the Old Testament prophetic hope, but Jesus understood the following statements about the miracles of the two Old Testament prophets as a prefigurement of His own rejection and ultimate ministry outside of Israel (4:24-27).⁹⁰ So, in keeping with the healing of Naaman, the Aramean (2 Kings 5), Jesus healed the Samaritan leper (Luke 17:11-19) and cast out the demon from the Syrophenician woman's daughter (Mark 7:24-30).⁹¹ Like Elijah and Elisha, Je-

⁸⁷ For example O'Reilly, *Sign and Word*, 180, n. 68; and I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 126-27.

⁸⁸ "Quite clearly, Stephen and the community which he represented believed and affirmed that Jesus was a Mosaic figure" (Barnett, "Jewish Sign Prophets," 691). On the parallel to Moses as a miracle-worker, Gerhardsson is probably correct in seeing Jesus' miracles parallel to Moses' deeds during the wilderness wanderings rather than the Exodus event in Egypt (*The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew*, 17). Barnett suggests that the difference between the Greek texts of Acts 3:22 and 7:37 and the Septuagint of Deuteronomy 18:15 means "there was a firm tradition among the first Christians which held that Jesus was 'the Prophet'," not just any prophet for whom Moses could be the pattern ("Jewish Sign Prophets," 691).

⁸⁹ Betz and Grimm, *Wesen and Wirklichkeit*, 31-42; Raymond E. Brown, "Jesus and Elisha," *Perspective* 12 (1971): 85-104; and Thomas Louis Brodie, "Jesus as the New Elisha: Cracking the Code," *Expository Times* 93 (1981-1982): 39-42.

⁹⁰ Another equally broad parallel between Jesus and Elisha has been observed by Roth, who notes that Elisha's miracles ultimately climaxed in the renewal of the rule of Yahweh in Israel through Joash and Jehu (2 Kings 10-12). Jesus' miracles have the same function on a much grander scale (Wolfgang M. W. Roth, "The Secret of the Kingdom," *Christian Century*, March 2, 1983, 182).

⁹¹ Brodie has made the case that John consciously reported the healing of the blind man in John 9 in order to parallel Elisha's healing of Naaman. Brodie sees common elements in the subjects of the healing (both were instruments of a greater message), the cure (the command to wash), the double reaction (Gehazi versus Naaman; the Pharisees versus the blind man), and the confrontation (transferral of

sus has significant power to raise the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37; Mark 5:21-23, 35-43; Luke 7:11-17) and cleanse lepers (2 Kings 5; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 17:11-19). Demons attempted to ward Jesus off with the same words the widow used of Elisha in 1 Kings 17:18 ("What do we have to do with you?" Mark 1:24; 5:7). And Jesus' disciples failed to exorcize demons (Mark 9:18-28) the way Gehazi failed to heal (2 Kings 4:31-33).

MIRACLES AND THE TIMING OF THE KINGDOM

The works of Weiss and Schweitzer⁹² also touched off debate about the timing of the kingdom, and the miracles of Jesus were discussed in this larger context. In the so-called "consistent eschatology" of Schweitzer, Jesus' miracles were viewed as signs that the kingdom was about to break forth and the end of the age was imminent. Schweitzer said Jesus believed the miracles were pointers to a soon-coming cataclysmic finale. In answer to this view Dodd articulated a so-called "realized eschatology,"⁹³ arguing from the parables and Matthew 12:28 that the miracles showed the full presence of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry. It was not imminent, he said, because it had already arrived. Most scholars place themselves somewhere in the middle, claiming features of both an apocalyptic and a partially realized kingdom.⁹⁴

Subsequent discussions of this kingdom that is "already" but still "not yet" have not succeeded entirely in clearing the fog where miracles are concerned. In some cases miracles still are only heralds of the ultimate end of the world. For example Jeremias refers to Jesus' exorcisms as "foretastes," and "anticipations" of the eschatological hour when Satan will be visibly robbed of his power.⁹⁵ Similarly Fuller calls them "foreshadows,"⁹⁶ and Harvey understands them as proleptic transformations in light of an imminent future.⁹⁷ On the other hand a sig-

leprosy to Gehazi and blindness to the Pharisees) (Brodie, "Jesus as the New Elisha," 40).

⁹² Johannes Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892); and Albert Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906).

⁹³ C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 3d ed. (New York: Scribner, 1936).

⁹⁴ See the discussion and bibliography in George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 138–45, and G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 75–80.

⁹⁵ Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 95.

⁹⁶ R. H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (London: SCM, 1963), 40.

⁹⁷ Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 97.

nificant number of scholars are saying that such language does not go far enough. They say Jesus' miracles were not preparations, illustrations, signs, or indicators of the kingdom; they were the kingdom itself. Brown echoes this thinking when he says the miracles were "one of the means by which the Kingdom came."⁹⁸ Van der Loos also concludes, "We do not regard miracles primarily as signs, seals, additions, attendant phenomena or however they are described, but see them as a function *sui generis* of the Kingdom of God."⁹⁹

While there is obvious merit to the middle way being forged in regard to the kingdom's timing, the miracles suggest that overly broad statements about the kingdom's presence in Jesus' ministry should be avoided. First, care must be exercised so that the operation of the kingdom in the miracles does not obliterate their stated function as signs (John 20:30-31). A sign, understood through the tradition of the Old Testament, points to something else. It either authenticates or predicts a coming event (e.g., Exod. 4:8-9; Isa. 7:14), but it is not to be identified with that event.¹⁰⁰ In the Gospels the miracles of Jesus and His disciples follow this pattern in relation to the kingdom by their provisional nature. Jesus' miracles did not bring about the final rest and restoration of the kingdom promised in the Old Testament. Those who were healed would again fall sick and die; the demons would escape complete subjugation until their "hour," and the creation would continue to suffer under the cosmic oppression of the evil one—all indications that the kingdom was not yet established.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Brown, "The Gospel Miracles," 187.

⁹⁹ Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 250-51. Others in agreement with Brown and Van der Loos include Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 80-83; Betz and Grimm, *Wesen and Wirklichkeit*, 30; Davey, "Healing in the New Testament," 55; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *God's Rule and Kingdom* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 127; and Oepke, "ἰάματα," 3:213.

¹⁰⁰ Richardson, *Miracle-Stories of the Gospels*, 57; and Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind*, 322-23.

¹⁰¹ The incomplete nature of Satan's subjugation showed to the ancient world that Jesus did not establish the kingdom in His miracles. One of the dominant features of the oriental monarch in ancient Israel and her environs was his position as head of the army. As guarantor of the nation's domestic and national security, the king led the army against all who would threaten the country's borders. The submission of his enemies would naturally entail their forcible disarmament and the annihilation of their threat to his governance. See Gerhard Delling, "ὑποπιτάσσω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 8 (1972): 42; Ludwig Schmidt, "Konigtum," in *Theologische Realenzyklopadie*, 19:328; and H. Lesetre, "Roi," in *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. F. Vigouroux (Paris: Letouzey & Ane, 1912), col. 1122. Per Beskow summarizes the functions normally associated with the concept of "king" as exalted judge, ruler, and conqueror (*Rex Gloriam: The Kingship of Christ in the Early Church*, trans. Eric J. Sharpe [Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1962], 38).

So in one sense there is a disjunction between what Jesus' miracles were and what they pointed to. As Ridderbos wrote, miracles indicate the coming of the kingdom and point to the cosmic palingenesis. . . . But they are not the beginning of this palingenesis, as if the latter were the completion of the miracles. For this palingenesis is something of the future world aeon; because it embodies the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of the world, it does not belong to the present dispensation. It even presupposes the precedence of the cosmic catastrophe.¹⁰²

Second, the Holy Spirit's role in Jesus' miracles indicates that the eschatological kingdom was present in some way.¹⁰³ The long-awaited outpouring of God's Spirit was being fulfilled. However, in view of the Spirit's role in creation and the giving of life, His role in connection with the kingdom may best be viewed in terms of His power or animating principle. Thus in light of Hebrews 6:5, the kingdom's presence in Jesus' miracles was the presence of the power of the eschatological kingdom, and not technically the presence of the kingdom itself. Jesus' miracles are then seen as signs of the kingdom, because in His ministry each partial victory over chaos was a foretaste of the final kingdom to come.

MIRACLES AND THE OFFER OF THE KINGDOM

Closely associated with the kingdom's timing is the element of human decision. For the Gospel writers, Jesus' acts and words were intended to provoke a decision in those to whom the revelations were made. He did not come simply working wonders and teaching with new authority; He came demanding response. "Repent and believe" (Mark 1:15) was the gospel proclamation from the beginning. To this demand for repentance, miracles gave a sense of urgency.¹⁰⁴ They were the awe-inspiring object lessons about which no one could be apathetic. In other words by their wondrous and signatory qualities they forced the issue: Was this message really what the messenger claimed or not? Miracles necessarily created a division in Jesus' audience according to whether they believed or refused to believe.

¹⁰² Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 119-20.

¹⁰³ The Spirit's unique presence in Jesus helps one avoid making the meaning of *ἐπιθασεν* in Matthew 12:28 bear too heavy a burden for the kingdom's establishment in Jesus. Sanders's caution to this effect is well taken (*Jesus and Judaism*, 134).

¹⁰⁴ Johannes Rehm notes that as miracles were observable demonstrations of the kingdom's presence, they gave an urgency to Jesus' ministry ("*μετανοέω*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 4 [1967]: 1001).

Such a division is clearly indicated in the Gospel of Matthew.¹⁰⁵ The combination of Jesus' words and miracles in chapters 11-12 elicits such rejection of His message by His own family and the people and leaders of Israel that Jesus began to change His message for them. Beginning in chapter 13 Jesus shrouded His teaching about the kingdom in enigmatic parables, and, as Baird has demonstrated, the parables of the kingdom function in different ways depending on whether Jesus was teaching those in belief or those in unbelief.¹⁰⁶ Beginning in Matthew 13 Jesus always made sure His parables of the kingdom were understood by those who believed in Him (i.e., the disciples), and He never explained His parables to those who were rejecting Him.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore the nature of the kingdom revealed in the parables is different from the nature of the kingdom sought in the prophetic hope. Ladd has observed this difference in content for the parables: "That there should be a coming of God's Kingdom in the way Jesus proclaimed, in a hidden, secret form, working quietly among men, was utterly novel to Jesus' contemporaries. The Old Testament gave no such promise."¹⁰⁸

If Jesus' teaching of the kingdom is directly related to the response He received, what about His miracles? Since they are inherently tied to His message, do they follow the same pattern as the parables in hiding the kingdom and pronouncing judgment on those who reject Him?

On the question of concealment, miracles do not necessarily follow the track of the kingdom parables, but they are not incompatible with it either. Miracles are by nature silent witnesses that need the word for understanding. With no specific word they are

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Mark R. Saucy, "The Kingdom-of-God Sayings in Matthew," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (April-June 1994): 175-97.

¹⁰⁶ J. Arthur Baird, "A Pragmatic Approach to Parable Exegesis: Some New Evidence on Mark 4:11, 33-34," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76 (1957): 201-7. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 35, n. 110.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 13:34 seems to indicate that Jesus told more "kingdom" parables to the crowds, but they remained unexplained and enigmatic for the most part. After chapter 12 the crowds (including the leaders) understood only three parables about the kingdom of God (21:27-32; 21:33-45; 22:1-14), all of which explain how the kingdom was taken from them. Thus no positive information about the kingdom of God is revealed in parabolic form to those in rejection, though the disciples were privy to every kingdom parable. Kingdom (βασιλεία)-language follows the same pattern. Jesus' only public statement about the kingdom to the crowds (in addition to the parables above) is in 23:13, which again was directed to the leaders and was negative: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

¹⁰⁸ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 225.

more open to diverse and perverse interpretations. After an individual made a decision about Christ, a new dimension of the message was added only for those insiders (i.e., the information in the kingdom parables). However, in accord with this new dimension that Jesus was revealing by word, miracles have only limited participation. To insiders, miracles confirm that His message is what He says it is, but they do not specifically affirm the details of the new message. As always, they point to the message, whatever it may be, and the messenger. Thus in contrast to Jesus' verbal proclamation, which did vary according to the spiritual receptivity of the audience, few changes occurred in Jesus' miracles. He still publicly healed and cast out demons in Israel (e.g., Matt. 17:14–18; Luke 17:11–19). He fed the multitudes (Matt. 14:13–21) and walked on the sea (Mark 6:45–52). Miracles continued to reassure the faithful and to harden the opponents.¹⁰⁹

While Jesus did give information about the kingdom to the crowds after Matthew 13, He never gave positive information to anyone other than the spiritually receptive. They alone were given to understand the "mysteries" of the kingdom in the "kingdom parables." On the negative side Jesus also had a message about the kingdom for those who rejected Him. Sometimes He needed to explain it (Matt. 21:27–32) and sometimes He did not need to do so (21:33–45), but always the message was one of judgment. The spiritually hardened who have rejected the kingdom will not be allowed to enter it (21:31); the kingdom is taken away from them (21:43) and they face the wrath of God (22:7). In both Matthew (21:18–22) and Mark (11:12–14, 20–25) this negative message is authenticated with the miraculous withering of the fig tree. Following the parable of the same subject in Luke 13:6–9 and the rich tradition of Old Testament and intertestamental texts on fig trees, the plight of the tree foreshadows the eschatological judgment on the nation in its spiritually blind and deaf condition.¹¹⁰ Coming after the people's rejection of Jesus (Matt. 12; Mark 3), this miracle of the fig tree clearly illustrates their rejection of Him and His message.

CONCLUSION

Jesus' many miracles were significant revelations of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached. They revealed the king-

¹⁰⁹ Compare the reaction by Jesus' enemies exemplified in the resurrection of Lazarus (John 12:10–11).

¹¹⁰ See Blomberg, "The Miracles as Parables," 330–33; and Delling, "Der Verstandnis des blunders," 270. But Kallas argues the withered fig tree shows the judgment of Satan, not Israel (*Significance of Gospel Miracles*, 95).

dom's eschatological and soteriological nature according to promises in the Old Testament about the Spirit-anointed New Age. Miracles demonstrated that the kingdom Jesus announced would be Yahweh's promised Sabbath rest, the end of Satan's chaotic exploitation of the creation, the final actualization of divine mercy, and the perfect realization of purity from the heart. They also revealed the kingdom's inherent physicality. They showed that the Old Testament promises regarding the creation, human societies, and individuals called for physical and thus literal fulfillment in this kingdom. The kingdom of God is not a spiritual entity only.

A secondary function of miracles was to reveal the identity of Jesus as Miracle-worker. By the testimony of His miracles Jesus could legitimately lay claim to a messianic role as presented in canonical and noncanonical witnesses. His miracles also show the kingdom's interface with human decision about His ministry. Jesus' miracles indicate the presence of kingdom power, and yet they are not the presence of the kingdom because they are not the kingdom itself in its fullness; of this reality they are only signs. Also miracles show why the eschatological kingdom was not established in Jesus' First Advent. They provide a unique angle from which to observe Jesus' initial offer of the Old Testament prophetic hope, its rejection by all quadrants of Israel, and finally its subsequent change and delay.

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