

**The Gospel of Matthew**  
**The Miracles**  
*New Testament Survey – Lesson 6*

We were in trial in Los Angeles a while back when one of the guys on our trial team (Juan) asked me,

“Boss, do you and Becky have a song that is your song?”

My reply was,

“A song? Heavens, we have multiple songs for multiple occasions!”

At this point, Juan’s cohort on the team, Jesse, replied,

“Yeah, right, Boss... In other words, you don’t have a song!”

I informed them both that we really do have multiple songs. I have known my wife since I was a junior in high school and she was a freshman. We had at least one class together, ran in the same circles, and spent a fair amount of time together. I told Juan and Jesse that we had “a song” from high school, we had a song that was our general song as a married couple, we had a song for Guatemala, we had a song for courtship, we had a song for most holidays, and more. The guys thought I was merely making up details to cover the fact that we did not really have a song. In reply to their accusation that I was bluffing, I called Becky immediately, putting the phone on speaker before she answered.

“Hey Becky,” I started, “I have you on speaker with the trial team here in the room. Juan and Jesse want to know if we have a song that is ours.”

Becky *immediately* said, “A song? Guys, we have multiple songs for multiple occasions!”

Everyone in the room was stunned. She then explained that we have a song from high school, we had a song that was our general song as a married couple, we had a song for Guatemala, we had a song for courtship, we had a song for most holidays, and more. Her answer mirrored mine so closely that it seemed like a set up. They had to know if it was. Jesse declared,

“Okay boss, write down your song from high school on a sheet of paper!”

I wrote down, “Float On - the Floaters.” They then asked Becky, what was your High School song, and she replied,

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“Float On by the Floaters.”

Every one was stunned (I should add here that we did not find that our song because it was a great song. To the contrary, it was our song because we both made interminable fun of it. Teasing was then, and has remained, an integral part of our relationship). From there, the team went through various categories having me write the song and following up asking Becky what the song was. Time after time, we nailed each one.

Becky is not only my marvelous wife, but she is also my best friend. Over the decades as we have grown close, we have learned the other one so well we can reasonably anticipate ideas, thoughts, motives and actions. Having said that, there is still much about Becky that is a mystery to me. Many times she surprises me. As we have grown older together, the surprises are less and less, but they are still there! Time and intimacy increases understanding and produces a type of “oneness,” but it does not remove individuality. She is still Becky and I am still Mark.

There is a way that this helps me in my understanding of God and Scripture. I have walked intimately with God for over four decades. In that time, I have grown to understand him better and better. By his grace and revelation, I can better sense his will and more readily see the world in his eyes. Yet even as I have grown closer to him, the distance between who he is and what he thinks is so great is not in the same ballpark as the relationship I share with my wife. It is not even in the same universe! For he is God and I am not. I can no more relate to him as God than my dog can relate to me as a human.

Still, he has made humanity in his image, enabling a degree of understanding and fellowship beyond that of a mere animal. Furthermore, he has taken the initiative to relate to us and to divulge aspects of that relationship through revelation we call Holy Scripture. Even beyond that, he then took the miraculous and almost inconceivable step of becoming a human in Jesus, setting out in *truly human terms*, aspects of his character and identity. We can learn of God in the most relatable terms by seeing him in Jesus. In Jesus, we also see most clearly his mission: repairing the relationship we broke. We are a people in desperate need of his saving.

In this sense, we approach in this class the miracles Matthew recorded. We see in these miracles, the hand of God moving to heal and restore, all while proclaiming the good news of the relationship made possible in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew does not put the miracles into any specific category. We will, however, look at them in groups (healings, exorcisms, supernatural acts, and resurrections) with an emphasis on the healings.

## HEALINGS

Healings are important in Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry. In Matthew chapter four, the beginning of Jesus' ministry is set out with teaching and healing hand in hand. Jesus was ministering to people in their mind as well as their body:

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them (Mt. 4:23-24).

Aside from the general comments that Jesus was healing "every disease and affliction," we read specific episodes of healings that give us greater insight into Jesus and God as Matthew unfolds the events. We will group them by some of the lessons they illustrate.

### *Jesus - a God of Compassion*

Matthew 9:18–26 has Jesus on a mission to help a ruler whose daughter had died. While en route, a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years came up behind Jesus and touched the tassels on his clothes. The touch, although coming from behind, did not escape the notice of Jesus. Jesus turned and told the woman,

Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well (Mt. 9:22).

Instantly, the woman was healed. The compassion of Jesus is shown in words and deeds. The woman did not have enough courage to come face to face with Jesus. In desperation, she sought to touch his garment hidden and unknown to him. Jesus could have healed her, leaving her in her self-sought anonymity, but he did not. Instead, he turned around and called her out. He then pronounced his healing, giving her a special bonding word of relationship, "daughter."

Matthew's Greek goes a step further in this healing than we normally understand from reading it in English. Matthew uses a Greek word *sozo* (σωζω) when relating the story. *Sozo* is translated in the English Standard Version as "made well." We see it three times in this story:

And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well

[*sozo*].” Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well [*sozo*]. And instantly the woman was made well [*sozo*].

*Sozo* has a wonderful set of meanings both in the Greek and in the ways it was used to translate the Hebrew Old Testament in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was done over the few centuries before Christ). The word conveyed a sense of “saving.” It is root word used in theology for the study of salvation (“*soteriology*” from the noun form of *sozo*, *soteria*). The Greek word for “Savior” also comes from the root (*soter*). The pre-Biblical Greek usage was often a salvation in the sense of helping out from an immediate and desperate need. Armies about to be destroyed needed “*sozo*”-ing, as did cities under attack. In translating the Old Testament, *sozo* was used to free one from a trap and to set one into a safe position. It is used repeatedly in the story of Lot being saved from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In Judges, we read of the Israelites being oppressed because of their sins, and their cries for God to save them from the oppressors and from the just fruits of their idolatry (*see, e.g.,* Judges 10:12-16).

Understanding the fuller breadth of the word helps us have insight into Matthew’s choice of it in this story. This is a woman who needed not simply a physical healing; she was at the end of her rope. She needed salvation from her distress! She needed help from Jesus who honored the hidden reach of a wounded soul.

A second healing that readily illustrates the compassion of God in Jesus is found in Matthew 20:29–34. In this story, Jesus and his crowd of followers have just left the verdant oasis of Jericho and are beginning a trek through the dry desert area beyond that oasis. It is on that dry, lifeless road where Jesus encountered two blind men crying out,

“Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!”

“Mercy,” that was the request for those two blind men. This was a cry for Jesus to act out of compassion. “Mercy” is not found in the attitudes of the crowd of Jesus’ followers. They tried to shush the men. This desert journey from Jericho to Jerusalem was sixteen miles. It was not worth stopping to deal with two old blind fellows! But Matthew tells the story clearly: Jesus *stopped*. Jesus then engaged the men asking what act of mercy they wanted from him and they replied,

“Lord, let our eyes be open.”

Matthew tells us Jesus healed them, but adds a feature to the healing missing in Mark’s account. Jesus touched them, which Mark explained also, but Matthew adds that Jesus did so out of “pity.” Matthews’ word for pity is a long one,

*splangchnizomai*, and it means that Jesus had “compassion” on the men. This root is translated as “bowels” in the old King James Version and it stands for a very deep and visceral reaction. Jesus was deeply moved! Jesus stopped on a difficult road and went out of his way to talk to these two, hear their needs, and then from compassion, Jesus reached out and touched their eyes, giving them the sight they longed for.

### *Jesus - a God of Authority*

In his healing ministry, we see Jesus not only as a God of compassion, but also as a man manifesting the authority of God.

In Matthew 8:5–13, Matthew recorded the healing of a servant belonging to a centurion (a Roman military officer). The centurion asked Jesus to heal his servant, and Jesus responded, expressing a willingness to go with the centurion:

“I will come and heal him.”

The centurion stopped Jesus from going with the statement:

“Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes... (Mt. 8:8-9).

Jesus marveled that a non-Jew had such faith, noting the strong faith of the Roman. The centurion had understood that Jesus was not miraculously healing people because Jesus possessed some magic touch. Jesus healed because of his authority over disease. Jesus healed as God.

Jesus healed the servant with a word without ever venturing to the servant’s side.

The authority behind Jesus’ healing is also shown in the story of the paralytic related in Matthew 9:1-8. This is the story where Jesus was in the house at Capernaum and the crowds made it difficult for anyone else to get into the house. So, as Mark related the events, some friends of the paralyzed man brought him on a stretcher, chopped through the thatch roof, and lowered the man down. Matthew does not repeat the great lengths the friends went to in getting the man before Jesus, but Matthew does tell the events that happened afterwards.

Jesus saw the faith involved in such efforts and declared to the paralytic,

“Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.”

This was thought to be blasphemy by the doubters in the crowd, which, if you think about it, was actually blasphemy on their part in doubting God at work in Christ! Jesus knew their internal reactions and spoke of it publicly declaring,

“Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.”

This was, and is the authority of Jesus. The God who heals diseases is the God who has authority over sin and all its effects. While Matthew does not use the Greek word *sozo* for this healing as he did with the woman who had the issue of blood, the story still hearkens back to another usage of *sozo* by Matthew. In the first chapter of Matthew, where Joseph is getting reassurance from the angel about Mary’s pregnancy, Joseph was told to name the baby Jesus because Jesus would “save his people from their sins” (Mt. 1:21). Matthew did use the word *sozo* in that passage.<sup>1</sup> Jesus heals because Jesus saves. For Jesus to have authority to heal, Jesus must have had authority over sin. Disease is a consequence of original sin; it is not God’s design for humanity.

In this sense, we also see the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law in Matthew 8:14-17. After her healing, and the healing of others brought into her home, Matthew links the role of Jesus as healer and savior quoting Isaiah 53:4,

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”

### *Jesus – a Teaching God*

We started this section on healings quoting from Matthew 4:23-24 where Matthew tied Jesus’s ministry as a teacher to his ministry as a healer. We are not surprised, therefore, to see times where the healing itself is closely tied to the teaching. Of course, just because one is teaching, does not necessarily mean another is learning!

In Matthew 12:9-14, we read of Jesus at a synagogue on a Sabbath being confronted with a man whose hand was withered. Jesus had a history of confrontations with certain legal specialists about what the law allowed on a Sabbath, as Matthew noted in the narrative preceding this one. This narrative placed Jesus at synagogue, so he was in a public setting. This would provide

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<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising that Matthew used *sozo* in this passage. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Hebrew scholars repeatedly used *sozo* as the Greek word to translate the Hebrew *yeshua* (ישוע), which meant “deliverance,” “help,” or “salvation.” In other words, the root meaning of Jesus’ name was, in Greek, *sozo*.

Jesus' opponents a chance to drive home his perceived heresy. For Jesus, however, this moment of confrontation was something more. It was a teaching moment!

The Pharisees and those of their perspective challenged Jesus with the question,

“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

Matthew clarifies that they were not really looking to learn, but were trying to find a public basis to “accuse him.” Jesus took the public moment as a chance to teach. Jesus asked the plotters a real-life question:

“Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?”

Of course, all who heard this knew the answer, whether the plotters would say it publicly or not. Everyone would not risk losing that sheep, and would pull it out! With his point made, Jesus needed merely to draw the logical conclusion by adding,

Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

At that point, Jesus healed the man.

The cynics who started this process did not learn from the moment. The teaching of Jesus certainly impressed others, for the story was recorded and reported. Yet for the cynics, it was another reason to hate Jesus. He had taken their moment of public confrontation, where the cynics were going to disgrace Jesus and reveal his heresy, and used it instead to teach truth. God and compassion trumped the cynic's interpretation of the law. Matthew recorded that rather than learning, the Pharisees “went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.”

*Jesus – Not a Show and Tell God!*

We have in the healings of Christ a number of stories that speak to an important aspect of God's character and actions in Jesus. Jesus was never using his miracles as some show and tell project. From the beginning temptations in the wilderness, Jesus never set out to use miracles to prove his identity. Similarly, when the cynics wanted to know if Jesus was really Messiah, he would never cater to their agenda and desires. Jesus did not dance to their tune, and never saw it necessary to fit their mold of what they wanted. Twice in Matthew, Jesus proclaimed that,

An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah (Mt. 12:39; 16:4).

Not surprisingly, then we find several healings of Jesus where his explicit command is that those healed *not* tell others what Jesus had done. In Matthew 8:1-4, Matthew recorded Jesus healing a man with leprosy. The leper approached Jesus and knelt before him exclaiming,

“Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper, something quite unheard of, for the leper was unclean,<sup>2</sup> and responded,

“I am willing.”

Immediately, the leper was cleansed.

Matthew then added the interesting instruction from Jesus:

See that you say nothing to anyone.

This instruction cropped up again in Matthew 9:27-30 discussed earlier where Jesus healed two blind men out of compassion. After their eyes were opened, Matthew says Jesus gave them the “stern warning,”

See that no one knows about it.

Jesus was not a show and tell God. He never set about to produce faith in the masses by performing an otherwise incomprehensible feat. Jesus could easily have done that, for it was not outside the scope of God’s power. As a general rule, it is not the way of God. Jesus did not come to remove the significance of faith by performing miracle sideshows.

These lessons also show Jesus was concerned about people trying to set him up as an earthly king, when that was also the furthest thing from Jesus’ plans. Think about your willingness to put your life on the line fighting for a king who could speak and heal! That would certainly be the kind of earthly king worth fighting for! In faith, though, we are prompted to spend our lives in service of a king who heals for the permanent kingdom of heaven.

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<sup>2</sup> There is an ironic touch here. Jesus was not made unclean by touching the leper, which would ordinarily be the case. Instead, the cleanness of Jesus was contagious and the touch made the leper clean!



Reading these stories should prompt in the faithful a request in the heart of all who understand their spiritual leprosy or blindness. We have the assurance that should any of us kneel before Jesus and ask, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean,” Jesus will do so. Certainly, Jesus cares more about us than the condition of our skin.

In conclusion, we see in the healings of Christ his concerns for those hurting, those in need, and those struggling with life. Jesus has compassion and authority to heal and to save. His concerns are for eternity, more so than the moment, and he set out with purpose to do those things God had for him to do. Jesus did not follow the thoughts or ideas of man. It was never a case of Jesus becoming what man wanted or expected. It was, instead, Jesus being God, revealing God’s agenda and plans for those who would accept and learn them in faith. Jesus was the physician who came to those understanding their need for healing (Mt. 9:12-13).

## **EXORCISMS**

Matthew records a number of times where Jesus stood in conflict with Satan and the demonic world. None of the gospel writers were hesitant to write about the spiritual battle as it intersects the lives of people and the fallen world in which we live.

In Matthew 8:28–34, Matthew noted that while Jesus was in the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men came from the tombs to meet Jesus. The demons knew Jesus; they called him “the Son of God.” The demons asked Jesus whether he had come to torment the demons “before the appointed time.” Realizing they were to be cast out of the men, the demons request that Jesus allow them to indwell a herd of pigs. Jesus commanded the demons, “Go,” and they came out from the men and went into the pigs. The pig herd then rushed down a steep bank into the water where they drowned. The town heard about Jesus casting demons out of men into non-kosher pigs and came out. They wanted to see Jesus, but wanted nothing to do with him beyond that. As Matthew related the events,

the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Matthew writes in such a way as to warn us against being folks who do not like how the Messiah deals with our uncleanness and our problems. We may want to get a glimpse of him, but we do not really want anything to do with someone who is so hands on! Heaven forbid we should ever request Jesus to leave, not accepting that his work is for the best.

Another negative reaction to Jesus' confrontations with the demons is found back in Matthew 9:27-34 where Jesus healed the blind men. Afterwards, a man who was mute due to demon possession was brought to Jesus. Jesus drove out that demon and the man was able to speak. Confronted with such a miracle worker, the Pharisees began to declare that Jesus must be on Satan's payroll! They said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons." It is sad to see how even the best deeds can be painted wrong by those who do not know the Lord.

In Matthew 15:21-28, we again read of another non-Jew coming to Jesus for help. A Canaanite woman had a daughter suffering terribly from demon possession. As she sought Jesus' help, Jesus explained,

"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

The woman was not satisfied with anything short of help, and she knelt before Jesus begging,

"Lord, help me!"

Jesus then replied that his work was for the Jews saying,

"It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

Matthew's word for "dogs" is the diminutive form that some scholars translate "household puppies." Jesus' rejection is not mean or harsh, but it is a rejection nonetheless. The woman did not accept the second rejection any more than she did the first. She accepted the analogy that as a non-Jew, she was not of the household where Jesus was sent, as she replied,

"Yes, Lord, but even the dogs [puppies] eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Jesus put up no more challenges, and immediately healed her daughter, adding an encouraging commendation to the woman for her "great faith."

In this story, we notice the reward for persistence before God. We also see that Jesus honored respectful dialogue over what he would or would not do. Finally, we should note that the story does not say that Jesus would not have healed should the woman have been less persistent. We just know that Jesus walked her through the understanding of who he was and what his purpose was. Then, the gentile's faith was the basis for healing.

The final demonic possession story from Matthew is found in 17:14-23. A boy was suffering from demon-induced seizures. In this circumstance, Jesus' apostles

had not able to heal the boy on their own, even though Jesus had specifically given the men the authority over demons. Jesus rebuked the demon and healed the boy. The disciples later approached Jesus in private and asked why they were unable to drive out the demon. Jesus explained that the disciples lacked the faith necessary to do so. Faith, Jesus explains, can move a mountain. Instructively, as holy and faithful as the best of mankind, there are some matters that need the faith and hand of Jesus.

## **SUPERNATURAL ACTS**

Certainly, the miracles we have already discussed are all supernatural acts. Here, we are looking at those supernatural acts that do not fit into the classifications we have already covered. These set out Jesus' mastery over the elements of the earth.

Matthew 8:23-27 shows Jesus asleep in a boat when a storm starts raging. The scared apostles awakened Jesus fearing they were going to capsize. Jesus rebuked their lack of faith and then rebuked the wind and waves, bringing instant calm. The Apostles were amazed that even the winds and waves obey Jesus, but their lack of faith seemed a bit lost on them.

This story brings us back to the healing accounts in the language Matthew chose. The disciples were pleading for Jesus to "save" them, and Matthew used the word found in several healing accounts, *sozo*.

And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us [*sozo*], Lord; we are perishing." And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

Here, the lack of faith compelled their need for saving, even as they had witnessed the presence of faith bring about saving in the lives of others!

In Matthew 14:13-21, we read of Jesus feeding 5,000 men (with an unnumbered amount of women and children) with merely five loaves of bread and two fish. The following chapter (15:29-39) has Jesus feeding 4,000 men (again, with an unnumbered group of women and children) on seven loaves of bread and a few fish. These miracles, aside from showing the compassion of Christ, furthered Matthew's intent of showing Jesus greater than Moses, as one who feeds the masses much like the manna and quail fed the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. While God gave the manna and quail (not Moses!), Jesus himself does the feedings here having first blessed the bread with thanksgiving to God.

In a similar manner, Matthew related the story of Jesus going up on a mountain where Moses and Elijah appear before Jesus in Matthew 17. The three had a conversation of which we know no details. *What* was said was unimportant to Matthew; *who* was involved was the important thing. The greatest prophets of the Old Testament came to Jesus. Peter saw it and was ready to build booths for each of the three, when a voice singled out Jesus as the significant presence:

He [Peter] was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said,

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

To some degree, Jesus, even as he healed and worked miracles, was a bit more ordinary to Peter. Peter had gotten used to Jesus. The stunner was the presence of Moses and Elijah, yet they paled in true comparison to Jesus!

Hearing the heavenly proclamation brought a sense of reality back to Peter, James and John who, upon hearing it,

fell on their faces and were terrified.

Jesus did not rub it in; he did not laugh at them; he tenderly came and touched them,

But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

A final incident of Jesus acting in a supernatural way over nature is found in Matthew 21:18-22. Jesus the Son of God was hungry, a very real human condition. He saw a fig tree, and looked for a fig. The tree was barren and Jesus spoke to the tree saying,

“May no fruit ever come from you again!”

Immediately, the tree withered. The disciples were amazed and Jesus used this episode to reconfirm to them the importance of faith in our lives. With faith, the disciples can do far more than make a fig tree wither.

## **RESURRECTIONS**

There are two resurrections in Matthew. We will save the second one (the resurrection of Jesus) for later. This week, we focus on Matthew 9:18-26. Here, a ruler came to Jesus explaining that his daughter had died and he wished Jesus

would come resurrect her. Jesus went to the man's house and sent out all the mourners and watchers. Jesus told them to leave because the girl was not dead, but simply asleep. Jesus then called the girl back from the grave. Jesus knew that death was not an extinction where one exists no more; death is just a pause before the full resurrection. The girl was readily available to come back and re-inhabit her body.

## CONCLUSION

In the introduction, I began noting the closeness I have with my wife. Hand in hand with that, however, is the fact that she is now and will always be, to some degree, a mystery to me. There is more to know and learn about her. This mystery is even greater in the relationship I share with God. There is so much more to know and learn, that at times it seems that the fraction I understand is lost in the chasm of what I do not.

As a young man, I could not understand why God rarely moves in miracles that defy modern science and explanations. I could not understand why God's hand often seems to be through people and events in ways that leave open the possibility of fate or coincidence. It made no sense to me that there were no people with missing limbs where the limbs grew back right before my eyes (or the eyes of someone I knew reliable).

As I have grown in my years and my walk with the Lord, I have grown in my understanding. I am beginning to better realize what it means that he made this world and put it under the care and hand of humanity to administer and nurture. That we have purpose in that mission of living here and following his will in a system that has consistent laws of nature. This is not a magic world of spells and enchantments; it is a world of laws and rules. It is a world of consistency. God can and does move in this world to effectuate his will, even as he calls us to be his instruments in that mission. We are the *body* of Christ in the sense that we are his physical presence on earth. We can see God's hand in what we do, and in the lives of others.

This is not a novel 21<sup>st</sup> century idea. It is explained and explored in Scripture as well. God worked a miracle in the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. Was this a miracle without explanation? Of course not! The genetic material of Isaac was that of Abraham and Sarah, even though medical science would say they were too old to have a child. That is contrasted to the birth of Jesus, a miracle defying science as a virgin birth. But the birth of Christ was a one-time event in human history, an event of truly monumental proportions that would make no sense as a true incarnation in any other way. I have learned as I have grown that it is not

stunning that most events in the hand of God work through the world he has made. He weaves together threads of humanity to produce the tapestry of history that unfolds before our eyes daily. Can God do the miracles that defy science? Of course! Do we see it daily? No. Daily we see the miracles of God working in the world he has created. This is the Biblical explanation as we see God hardening Pharaoh's heart to use him as he sees fit. We see God using the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Romans to effectuate his will on earth.

Even with the life of Jesus, we see the miracles that defy science, but we see the miraculous working of one who calls apostles and has them learn him and his ways through life. There was no Vulcan mind meld, but trial and error – a gradual learning. Jesus was betrayed by actions of man. Jesus was crucified, a core event of salvation history through the actions of man. God worked out salvation through that human wrought crucifixion where Jesus, “took our illnesses and bore our diseases” (Matt. 8:17). Hand in hand with that, however, God then worked the science-defying miracle of a bodily resurrection of our Lord. Ah, the mighty mind and hand of God! Better understood as I live and grow closer to him, yet still a mystery that marvels and amazes. I have much to learn!

### **POINTS FOR HOME**

1. *“Who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person which is in him?”* (1 Cor. 2:11).

Paul asked this question and then extended the answer to the thoughts of God. Only the Spirit of God comprehends the thoughts of God. Why does he work as he does? Why does not he work the way we want him to? We can know some answers to this because the Spirit of God reveals them to us. The Spirit of God is responsible for the inspiration of Scripture and the revelation we have there. The Spirit also imparts spiritual truths to those indwelt by the Spirit. In this sense, as we draw near to God in study, prayer, and life, we learn more of him, just as we do in our human relationships. We are not going to know him fully, but we will know him better! This is a daily goal for me, and I urge you to make it one for you as well.

2. *“Save us [sozo], Lord; we are perishing”* (Mt. 8:25).

I want and need healing from God. I need his salvation from life's dangers and from the dangers to my soul. I need his protection physically and eternally. More importantly, my family and friends need it. I am

committed to kneeling before God in prayerful seeking of that healing, and I urge you to do so as well!

3. “...*when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.*” (Mt. 17:8).

Does Jesus get “old” to you? Are you used to his incredible love and compassion? Would a miracle appearance by folks long dead stun you more than the presence of Jesus in your life? If so, then join me in my desire to see “no one but Jesus only.”