

# Jesus' Miracles

Matthew 4:23-25  
*Halifax: 14 September 2003*

## **Introduction**

In Matthew 4:23-25, Matthew gives us an introduction to the public ministry of Jesus in Galilee.

- Here is a summary of what Jesus did in His public ministry from day to day.
  - Matthew shows us that His was an unceasing labour in two kinds of ministry:
    - **the ministry of the word**
      - which includes preaching and teaching
    - **the ministry of mercy**
      - which includes all kinds of miracles and deeds to relieve human misery.

In the several chapters that follow, Matthew will give us glorious examples of each of these ministries.

- In chapters 5-7,
  - he gives us an example of Jesus' ministry of the Word in the Sermon on the Mount.
- In chapters 8-9,
  - he gives us a number of specific examples of Jesus' ministry of mercy.

It seems clear that Matthew was very intentional about introducing this two-fold outline at the end of chapter 4 because at the end of chapter 9,

- he essentially repeats the same thing:
  - Matthew 9:35-36: Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

Lord willing, over the next few months,

- we will be looking at Jesus' public ministry in Galilee in great detail as it is presented to us in Matthew 5-9.
- But before we begin to look at the details,
  - It will be very helpful for us to look at this summary that Matthew gives us in chapter 4.

- In doing this, we will take a general survey of the entire forest—
  - in the weeks to come, we will look at the individual trees.
- In looking at this summary of Jesus ministry, my main goal is to show you how Jesus' Galilean ministry relates to you today...

**I. And first of all, I want you to see that Jesus' Galilean ministry is full of encouragement for you!**

A. The Bible everywhere encourages you to trust in Jesus Christ...

1. Now if Jesus were presented to us as one who came down from heaven calling down fire upon His enemies—
  - and as one having no sympathy for human suffering...
  - a. I suppose we would respond to Him the way the people did when the law was given on Mount Sinai—
    - Exodus 20:18-19 tells us what happened:
      - Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."
      - If Jesus was presented to us in this way, we would want to stay clear of Him lest we should be consumed!
    - b. Of course, I do not mean to say that Jesus does not reveal Himself to us as a consuming fire...
      - He is a consuming fire to sinners because that is what sinners deserve.
      - The revelation of Him at Sinai was just as much true as the revelation of Him in Galilee...
      - We need to understand Him as revealed at Sinai or we will never truly know Him as revealed in Galilee...
        - But at Galilee, he shows us that being a consuming fire is not His way toward man as man—
          - but only toward man in His rebellion.
          - He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, nor in their suffering.
  - 2. When Jesus took human flesh and came to earth,
    - He presented Himself as the One who is always ready to save sinners and to do them good.

- a. He is presented to us as One who spends His time going to minister to people in need—
  - as it is summarised by Peter in Acts 10, He went about “doing good.”
  - He shows His compassion toward us and His willingness to save us and help us,
    - in spite of the fact that we are the cause of our own troubles.
- b. His whole presentation of Himself in the world was as one who came to seek and to save that which was lost.
  - He is seen as the friend of sinners.
  - He is seen as the One who not only despises our sin, but also the misery it brings to us.
    - He is seen as the one who graciously acts to relieve us.
- c. The whole time from the coming of Christ two thousand years ago until He comes again is called in scripture “the day of salvation.”
  - In light of this, Paul declares (in his second letter to the Corinthians):
    - 2 Cor 6:1-2: We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.
    - This is a special time, a time to be saved, a time when He commands all men everywhere to repent.
  - Do not miss this day!
    - Hebrews 2:3-4: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”

TRANS> There is no greater folly than to live in this day, the day of salvation, and avoid the compassionate Lord Jesus Christ.

- Just seeing Him as He is presented in His Galilean ministry ought to send you running to Him to obtain mercy.

B. Just look at the things you can expect to receive from Jesus if you come to Him...

1. First, you can expect to receive instruction because He teaches.

- a. How desperately we need instruction, for we are lost in our sin and do not know which way to go apart from Him.
    - We do not know God and we do not even know our own purpose or place in this world.
    - We are groping around in the darkness until Jesus comes and teaches us.
  - b. He tells us about God and He tells us about ourselves—
    - He tells us both what we are and what we should be.
      - How we ought to treat our neighbour and how we ought to worship our God.
    - He tells us of God's mercy and of God's judgement, of God's power and God's beauty, or God's love and God's wrath.
    - He explains to us God's mighty works, the nature of His kingdom, and that we need to know about Him.
2. Secondly, you can expect to receive grace because He preaches the gospel of the kingdom.
- a. Teaching speaks of explaining, preaching of proclaiming and announcing!
    - In preaching the kingdom, He announced that He had come to reign...
    - And that in reigning, He had come to bring us back under His dominion and under God the Father...
    - And that as King, He would give us eternal life that we might be reconciled to God forever!
    - That He had come to destroy all our enemies that keep us from serving God.

TRANS> Preaching includes declaring to us what God has done to save us!

- b. But preaching also includes the proclamation to you of what you must do in light of His kingdom.
  - That you must repent, turn from your own way, to go in His way!
  - That you must follow Him, looking to Him for life, listening to His word and keeping it, believing upon Him as He is revealed in the word.
- c. After His death and resurrection, the gospel of the kingdom was even clearer!
  - Now we are told what He did to secure eternal life for us...
    - How He went to the cross to atone for our sins!
  - With a Saviour who is willing to go to such measures for guilty sinners—

- How could you reject Him?
- How could you do anything but run to Him?

TRANS> But there is even more that you can expect to receive from Him...

3. You can expect to be relieved from all the miseries that sin has brought into this world because He is the One who heals all our diseases.
  - a. During His Galilean ministry, Matthew tells you that Jesus “healed all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease” (v. 23).
    - We do not have a record that Jesus ever attended a funeral that did not end with rejoicing because the dead was restored to life!
    - There was no affliction that He was unable to cure.
      - He healed people who were blind from birth
      - He cast out demons
      - He caused paralytics to walk
      - He cleansed lepers
      - He even calmed the stormy sea
  - b. All this shows you that Jesus is the One you ought to run to!
    - 1) Here you see His **compassion**—that He went about continually doing these things for people—
      - He shows clearly that He came to relieve human misery!
      - They were good works designed to lead us to repentance.
    - 2) Here you see His **power** or **ability** to help us—
      - There may be some who are willing to help us as much as they are able—a doctor or a mother wanting to help her children...
        - but they all have limitations in their ability...
          - Jesus has no limitations!
            - He did not cure people gradually, but instantly!
            - He did not cure people partially, but completely!
            - And there was nothing with which He could not deal.
      - Jesus showed us plainly that He has the power over life and death, over all the issues of life, the authority to create and to destroy.
        - He shows us that He is the Son of God in whose hands are all things.
    - 3) And because He is both **compassionate** and **able** to relieve you of all your miseries, you can expect to be relieved of them all if you look to Him!

- He teaches us to expect all this healing power to be released toward us on the last day, the day of resurrection.
- While He was here, He gave us a foretaste of what He will do then...
  - And it is for us to see the works He did here and then to look with hope to His promise of resurrection.
  - He is both willing and able to take away all our miseries.

TRANS> But here there is need for a digression...

C. What ever happened to all these wonderful miracles?

1. To put in plain terms—

- Why did we have a funeral several months ago for the Bigney twins?
- Why do so many of you suffer from aches and pains in your bodies?
- Why do we even have to wear glasses?
- Why are we unable to stop the destructive storms that occur today?
- Why are we praying for people who have cancer who do not get well?
- Where is the God of resurrections?

2. Let me begin with several scriptural facts:

a. First, the fact is that during the three years Jesus was in Palestine His miracles were very extensive—

- We are only given a small sampling of all the thousands that He healed.
  - Matthew tells us that Jesus went all over Galilee and that people from all over learned of Him and came to Him.
- At the end of his gospel, John says,
  - “There are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”
  - Warfield suggests:
    - “The number of the miracles which He wrought may easily be underrated. It has been said that in effect He banished disease and death from Palestine for the three years of His ministry.”

b. A second scriptural fact is that the apostles were given this same ability to heal the sick and raise the dead,

- and were even given the ability to convey the healing gifts to others as a sign of their apostleship.
- Jesus gave them these gifts when He first sent them out into the ministry:

- Matthew 10:1: “And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all kinds of disease.”
  - This is exactly what they did, not only while He was alive, but even more after He died—
  - So we see that the healing ministry of Jesus was continued by the apostles even after Jesus had returned to heaven.
- c. A third scriptural fact is that even while the apostles still lived, it seems that these miracles began to diminish.
- 1) At the beginning of the book of Acts,
    - we are told of an abundance of healings and miracles,
    - Acts covers a time period of about thirty years...
      - and by the end of it, there is less and less mention of them in the places where the gospel has already gone.
      - At Malta, they appear, but when Paul reaches Rome, there is no mention of people coming to him for healing.
  - 2) The same cessation is seen in the epistles as well.
    - In the early letters, Paul speaks of an abundance of such miracles...
      - but by the time Timothy is written, he advises Timothy to take a little wine for his frequent stomach ailments (1 Tim 5:23)
      - and at the end of his second letter to Timothy he reports, “Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.”
        - It appears that Paul was not able to help him.
        - There is no scriptural evidence that by the end of apostolic age, miracles of any sort were still performed.
  - 3) We can put together several reasons why this is so.
    - a) First of all, because the signs were no longer needed when the apostles were no longer needed.
      - They were chosen by Christ to build the foundation of the church, and Paul tells us very plainly that He is the last of them—that Christ appeared to Him “last of all.”
        - So if there are no more apostles, then there is no more need for the signs of an apostle to confirm apostles.
      - The confirmed word of God has already been handed to us, and we have it in the scriptures.

- It is an evil and adulterous generation, such as our own, that seeks after a sign.
- Since the signs are no longer needed to confirm apostles, we should not expect to see them today.

TRANS> So the first reason these miracles of healing are so rare is because we have no need of them.

b) And the second reason they are not so extensive is because we need the infirmities themselves.

1) We need them to help us along in our sanctification.

- David expressed this truth in Psalm 119 when he said:
  - Ps 119:71: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.*
  - It is one thing to be full of praise to God and kindness to others when you are feeling well,
    - but it is quite another when your body is racked with pain.
- Paul was told that even he—as godly a man as he was—needed a thorn in the flesh to keep his pride under control.
  - Without affliction, we would all become self-reliant which is what pride is—when we think we don’t need God’s help.
  - Physical suffering reminds us in a very concrete way that we need God’s deliverance and so it deepens our faith.

2) We also need sickness because it helps us to fix our hope for physical healing on the day of the resurrection—

- lest anyone should think that day has already come!
- In Romans 8:23-25, we are told:
  - we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.
- In other words,
  - we are not delivered now from bodily affliction because God does not want us to get the idea that this is all there is!
  - He has much more in store for us and He wants us to hope for what He has promised!



- If He gave us too much now, we would forget that there is something much greater to look forward to!
- It would not do to have perfected bodies in a sinful world, lest we should become content with this sinful world!
- The redemption of our bodies is one of the many things that God has added to make us look forward to the return of Jesus.

TRANS> So then, we may conclude that although God sometimes answers our prayers to restore health,

- and that in a way, anyone who recovers is healed by Him,
- He does not do it in so miraculous or showy a way as He did when Jesus was here.
  - I am not prepared to say He never does or never will,
    - but certainly we must reject the Hollywood-type showmanship that surrounds so many so-called healing ministries in our day.
    - If God wants to perform a miracle to make Himself known, it will not be some uncertain thing like so many so-called miracles are today—
      - It will be clear and powerful and certain.
- But let none of you suppose that God's reduction of miracles means that He is any less compassionate toward human misery and suffering!
  - The testimony of Jesus healing every disease and infirmity that is presented to Him stands forever as a picture of what Heaven will be like!
  - He has authority over all our miseries, and when they have finished their purpose, He will bring us into eternal joy...
    - In Heaven, there will be no more tears.
    - What a wonderful Saviour Jesus is!
      - Run to Him, for He is both willing and able to save, and He will save—
        - not only for the guilt and corruption of sin, but also from the misery of sin.
        - He has shown us in His teaching ministry and in His healing ministry that this is what He delights to do.
  - Jesus' Galilean ministry is full of encouragement for you to turn to Him!
    - That is the first lesson from Jesus' Galilean ministry.

**II. Secondly, in Jesus' Galilean ministry there is an example for you to follow.**

- A. As a follower of Jesus, you are called to imitate Him—
1. And His example was one of good words together with good deeds.
    - a. Jesus was continually preaching the gospel of the kingdom,
      - but He was also continually carrying out deeds of compassion to relieve human suffering.
    - b. The two were always together, and continually complemented each other...
      - He was able to preach to many people because He had first cared for them.
      - Many who at first came to receive His ministry of compassion went away having received the ministry of the word.
        - Do you remember the Nobleman whose son was healed by Jesus?
        - At the end of it all, we are told,
          - “And he himself believed, and his whole household.”
          - He came, at first, for a physical blessing,
            - but went away with the greatest of spiritual blessings as well.
  2. If you follow church history, you see that error often occurs from an emphasis on one of these to the exclusion of the other.
    - a. So-called: “dead orthodoxy” is when you have all the right doctrine on paper, but no life to back it up—
      - You may have rules that you keep and all that sort of thing,
        - but there is no love toward others or sacrifice for their sake...
        - Nor is there a willingness to deny yourself in following Jesus.
      - The dead orthodox person may hold his beliefs privately, or he may be very outspoken,
        - but his life simply does not back up what he says.
        - His answers are right, but his life is not right.
        - James tell us plainly that “faith without works is dead.”
          - A person who claims to have such faith is still lost in his sin.
    - b. Then there is the opposite extreme which we might call “dead works.”
      - This includes those who are full of compassion and who busy themselves relieving human suffering,
        - but who have very little regard for God’s truth.

- There is something very defective about the faith of a person who is busy relieving human suffering,
  - but who has no concern to bring the truth of the gospel to sinners!
  - What kind of compassion is it that brings relief from a little pain and suffering in this world and leaves its beneficiary to perish in Hell with no warning?
    - And that when we have such a glorious gospel to proclaim!
- Sometimes their motivation in helping others seems to be almost a way of shaking their fist at God—
  - As if to say, “Even though you allow all this misery in the world, I am going to do something about it!”
- For others, it’s a way of trying to win friends and gain acceptance:
  - “Betty is so sweet.”
  - “Bill is such a nice guy.”
  - But no matter how sweet and kind Betty and Bill may be,
    - if they do not know God as He is revealed in Christ, all their good deeds are nothing but filthy rags.
    - The day of judgement will reveal the true nature of their works.
- Jesus teaches on this very thing in the Sermon on the mount:
  - He talks about those who pray and give to the poor only to be seen by men...
  - Of such He says, “They already have their reward.”
  - And of such He says:
    - Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

TRANS> So let us have both orthodoxy and compassion as a church!

3. Some of you may remember that when I first began preaching in this church,
  - I emphasised that my goal was see a church established that was both orthodox in doctrine and zealous in love.
    - a. Brothers and sisters,
      - this is not something that comes naturally!

- It is only by the grace of God that such a church can exist!
- b. And I think as we move toward organisation, we need to get down on our knees and pray that God will make us to be such a church!
- We have a long way to go!
  - But we belong to Jesus and this is what He wants us to be!
    - Let's not compromise on our doctrine one little bit, even if people think orthodoxy is cold and reject us because of it...
    - But on the other hand, let's not compromise on our practice either!
      - Let us learn to shower those around us with love and compassion!
      - People are hurting, and we are called to show love to them!
        - Many of them are just plain lonely in this increasingly cold and barren world.
        - They have never seen love exercised...
          - and you will remember,
          - Jesus said that people would know that we are His disciples by the love we have for one another.
          - We are commanded to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith.
- c. I have been challenged in my own life from this passage, and I want to be a more caring person.
- We all need to be like Jesus!
  - His life was beautiful, and ours will be beautiful too inasmuch as we imitate Him!
    - If God has been kind enough to make us His children,
      - to adopt us and bring us into His own family,
      - we ought to strive to become more like His Son!

TRANS> Jesus' ministry in Galilee is a wonderful example for us.

- B. But before I turn to the next point, let me just clarify one thing...
- His example is not, of course, to be mechanically followed...
  - We aren't to be like monkeys when we imitate Him...
1. What I mean is, first of all, with regard to teaching and preaching...
- a. You are not all called to teach and preach.
- In fact, the Bible says expressly,

- “Let not many of you become teachers” because as such, you will incur a stricter judgement.”
- b. But the way you imitate Jesus in teaching and preaching is in this:
- by testifying to the life giving benefits of His truth and urging other people like the woman at the well did to come and hear His word...
  - by answering the questions of those who ask you of the hope that is in you, telling them what Christ has done for you.
  - by praying for opportunities to speak to others about Christ and then making the most of those opportunities when they come.
  - by praying for God’s blessing on the word as it goes forth on Sundays.
2. And with regard to showing compassion—you are not called to perform miracles as Jesus did...
- but simply to relieve human suffering in what ever ways you can...
  - to reach out in love to the lonely, the hungry, the neglected, the poor, the sick...
    - wherever you see a need, to do what you can to help.
    - One example that comes to my mind that made my heart really glad was when we were able to help out Danielle’s sister when she had just had a baby...
      - she didn’t have anyone else to help her and it was good for us to help.
      - Let us be looking for opportunities to show love.

TRANS> Let us continually follow Jesus’ example in ways that God has given us to follow Him...

- We may not be able to calm the stormy sea, but we can send a card to a neighbour and take a meal by when there is a death in their home...
- We may not all be able to preach a sermon or explain the ins and outs of covenant baptism, but you can all be a signpost to point people to the truth that Jesus saves.

TRANS> And now we come to the third way you ought to benefit from Jesus’ Galilean ministry and that is...

### **III. You can benefit from Jesus’ Galilean ministry by learning from the multitude’s response to Him.**

A. You ought to imitate the multitude’s outward response to Jesus!

1. They did what anyone in the right mind would do—

- when there was a man who was healing people from all sorts of diseases and casting out demons and preaching a glorious gospel and teaching wonderful and precious truths...
  - a. They were coming to Him—
    - flocking to Him!
  - b. Verse 24 shows that they were bringing others to Him—their loved ones and their friends who had needs that they knew He could meet!
    - I suppose that in some cases this may have taken some persuasion!
    - But here was a man that could heal them and make them whole of all their diseases!
    - They would do all they could to get them to Jesus!
  - c. Then verse 25 tells us that great multitudes followed Him...
    - They came from all around—sometimes at fairly great distances.
    - It was worth the effort expended to go out of their way to hear His word and to receive His ministry.
2. Now let me ask you—
- a. When is the last time you encouraged someone to come and hear God’s word?
    - or the last time you took God’s word and showed someone how it applies to them in their need?
    - or held out to them the hope of the resurrection?
  - b. And let me ask you—how important is following Jesus for you?
    - Are you willing to be inconvenienced?
    - Do you find better things to do instead of coming to church and giving your attention to the word when it is preached?
    - Do you find better things to do than have family worship and family prayer?
    - Do you find better things to do than serve others for His kingdom?
    - Do you avoid applying His word to the areas of cherished sin in your heart?

TRANS> Learn from the multitude—

- They brought others to Jesus...
- And they followed Jesus themselves!

B. But also be warned from the multitude.

1. It is interesting to note that the word Matthew uses in verse 25 translated **multitude** when he says,
  - “Great **multitudes** followed Him...”
    - is the word *oclos*
      - This word refers to a throng, a confused crowd, an unorganised multitude.
      - In other words, they were not all there for the same purpose!
2. Although this multitude was following Jesus outwardly—
  - and that is something to imitate—
    - we also know from the rest of the story of the gospels that many of them—even most of them—were there for the wrong reasons!
  - a. John tells us how Jesus responded to the multitudes in the early days of His ministry who believed in Him...
    - John says,
      - “But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.”
    - Jesus knew what people are like and from this we should take warning!
      - A multitude was following, but He knew that there were many who were not sincere!
  - b. There will always be a lot of people who follow Jesus for the wrong reasons!
    - 1) Some came only to see what they could get from Jesus—
      - perhaps if He was going to be king,
        - they could gain some political clout by befriending Him as He rose to power...
      - Others came only to be healed of physical infirmities, but had no desire to be cleansed from sin—
        - these came for health, wealth and prosperity in this world rather than for eternal life in the world to come.
        - Jesus confronted people like this who wanted to make Him king after he fed the five thousand with these words:
          - John 6:26-27: Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you

ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

- 2) Some came out of mere curiosity—
    - The Bible tells us that Herod especially wanted to meet Jesus because he hoped to seem him perform a miracle.
    - Here was the latest new thing.
      - Perhaps it was a remedy for boredom or loneliness, or just a desire to break the monotony of life.
    - Here was something to talk about and spout off one’s opinion about.
      - These were not there for salvation, but only for pleasure.
  - 3) Some came for even worse reasons—they were threatened by Jesus and wanted to see if there was some way that they might discredit His ministry.
    - They listened carefully to His teaching, but only to find fault with it.
    - Some listen to Jesus only to search for ways of to justify themselves.
      - The Scribes and Pharisees certainly fall into this category, for they are the ones who led the people to crucify Him.
- c. So you see that it will do you no good merely to be a part of the multitude that follows Jesus!
- If you would see the kingdom of God, you must be born again!
  - If you want to be saved from your sins and to have a hope in the resurrection, you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the gospel.
    - You must come to have a broken heart about your sin and want to be free of it...
    - And you must come to see that Jesus is the only One who can make you free!
    - And then you must look to Him to save you.



## **Conclusion**

What a blessing it is for us to have this wonderful record to us of Jesus' ministry in Galilee!

- Learn from it—
  - Learn how Jesus has all that you need and is full of compassion so that you will be encouraged to run to Him...
  - Learn to follow His example of serving others... by doing all you can to bring the word to them and by doing all you can to relieve their suffering.
  - And learn from the multitude to follow Him, but also to take heed lest you follow Him for the wrong reasons.