**“The Very Works That I Do…Testify Of Me” – Part 1**

(John 5:31-36)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I want to talk about an area of evidence for belief in Christ that I have been thinking about for some time. This evidence concerns the works, or miracles, of Jesus and how they testify of Him.

1. The Bible is **full of miracles**, which sets it apart from all other writings upon which other religions are founded.

* 1. There are over 160 (poss. 180) instances of miracles recorded in the Bible, with its greatest miracle being the *incarnation* of Jesus, or God taking on human flesh, living among us, dying for us, and being raised from the dead, all for our salvation (Phil. 2:6-7).
	2. The Bible even claims to be “inspired,” or miraculously revealed through the work of Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).
1. How do we know the Bible can be trusted?

* 1. To answer this, I want to appeal to another unique aspect of the religion of Christ, which is how it claims these miracles **as proof of its truth**.

* + 1. For example, Hebrews does this in seeking faithfulness to the gospel based on miracles (Heb. 2:3-4 – “how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was **confirmed** to us by those who heard, 4 God also **testifying** with them, both by **signs** and **wonders** and by **various miracles** and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”).
		2. Here you see miracles presented both as matters of common knowledge as well as reason for believing the words of the apostles and prophets and continuing to be faithful to them.
	1. In addition to this, Jesus also claimed that the **miracles** He did and that are recorded in the gospels are **proof** of Him being the Messiah and the Son of God (John 5:31-35; **John 10:24-25, 37-38** – “The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the **works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me**… 37 If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, **believe the works**, so that **you may know and understand that the Father is in Me**, and **I in the Father**.”).
		1. We might reason that Jesus’ statement was based on them seeing the miracles, which we cannot.
		2. John goes on to say that recorded miracles are to produce this same results (**Jn. 20:30-31** – “Therefore **many other** **signs** Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 **but these have been written so that you may believe** that Jesus is the **Christ**, the **Son of God**; and that believing you may have **life** in His name.”)
		3. So, God says the answer for knowing that Jesus is the Christ are the **miracles**—the **signs** and **wonders** performed by Him that are written in the pages of the gospels.
1. Some, or all, may be wondering how this could work, how miracles **recorded in the Bible** can **prove** the **Bible’s claims** about Jesus being the Christ…when **we need proof of the miracles**!

* 1. It sounds like circular reasoning!
	2. But here is my question to you: Have you taken these statements of Jesus’ and John’s seriously enough to consider in depth Jesus’ miracles as proof that He is the Messiah and Son of God?

1. Today I want to being helping you do just that! To accomplish this, I would like to…
	1. Begin with a general consideration of the miracles of Jesus in hopes of helping you realize the positive impact these miracles can have on your faith.
	2. Next, I want to look at some of the specific miracles of Jesus’s Galilean ministry in hopes of helping you see how these also should positively impact your faith.
	3. In the end I hope to lead each of us to a greater faith and confidence in Jesus as our Savior and Lord!

BODY:

1. **A general look at Jesus’ miracles:**

* 1. To understand the significance of the claims made concerning Jesus’ miracles, some information about Israel and the Jews of Jesus’ day will be helpful.

* + 1. Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, top to bottom, was only around 180-200 miles, covering between 8-10 thousand sq. miles, which may seem like a lot, but it isn’t.

* + - 1. Tennessee alone covers over 42,000 sq. miles.
			2. Israel compares more closely to the state of New Jersey.
		1. It is also important to note that the Jews were a very connected people.

* + - 1. They had Synagogues where teachers of the Law and fellow Jews would visit when travelling, bringing news from other places.
			2. The Jews had to travel regularly to Jerusalem and visit to the temple, where news was shared as well.
			3. And, when Jesus came on the scene the Jews were looking for the coming of the Messiah and news of Jesus would have been, as the Bible says, the focus of their discussions!
			4. So, very little would have happened among the Jews in Israel, especially concerning Jesus, that was not spread all around in quick fashion!
	1. These realities would have made it **impossible to lie about the miracles of Jesus**, especially considering the sheer number Jesus is said to have performed. Why do I say this?

* + 1. There are 38-40 instances where miraculous acts are ascribed to Jesus during His **three-year** ministry.

* + - 1. These include miracles that show Jesus’ divine creative power, His power over the elements (calming the storm and sea), over nature, over life and death, etc.
			2. This number does not include situations where Jesus read people’s minds and *publicly responded to their thoughts*.
		1. To make the best case, let’s subtract the miracles where **only Jesus’ disciples** likely witnessed them.
			1. This leaves us with around 31 instances where Jesus performed **a miracle** with **multiple witnesses** who were not his close disciples.

* + - 1. Of these 25 instances, 22 claim there were **crowds** that witnessed them. And of these 22 instances, 11 of them state these were **large crowds/multitudes** that witnessed them.

* + - 1. In addition to these 25 instances, there are **6 accounts** (in Matthew alone) where Jesus is said to have performed **many/numerous miracles** before **large crowds/multitudes**.

* + - 1. This means that Jesus is said to have **performed 100’s of miracles**, possibly more, before **10 of thousands of witnesses**, maybe more, that **continued over a period of three years**!

* + 1. The Point: If Jesus did not do these miracles…

* + - 1. What would the writers of these gospels hope to gain by such **astounding claims** when the Jews would have known better, having **witnessed** Jesus’ ministry and being **very familiar with its details**?
			2. Why did so many Jews convert to Christ based on the miracles that were claimed of him (**Acts 2:22-24, 40-41** – “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man **attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs** **which God performed through Him in your midst**, **just as you yourselves know**— 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power… 40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”).

* + - * 1. One could argue that it this sermon was also made up.
				2. If so, why did the Jews believe, and we know they did, and why did it all start at Jerusalem among the very people who had recently had Him crucified?
				3. Why did it spread throughout the world in such amazing fashion?
1. **Individual miracles of Jesus’** **Galilean ministry**:

* 1. To grasp the impact of these miracles, we need some information concerning the area in which Jesus’ Galilean ministry took place.

* + 1. Jesus’ Galilean ministry was focused in an **8–10-mile area** at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee (NOTE: The city of Cookeville is about 8 miles long from top to bottom.)

* + 1. Concerned an area that archeological excavations show had…

* + - 1. Numerous towns and villages, some with populations of over 5000 people.

* + - 1. A large concentration of Jews.

* 1. **Miracle in Capernaum**:

* + 1. Capernaum was a small fishing village on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, 85 miles from Jerusalem.

* + - 1. It was the city in which Jesus chose to live.

* + - 1. It had a population of **1,500** and was only about **60 acres in size** (1 sq. mile = 640 acres).

* + 1. Jesus is recorded as having done **10 miracles** there.

* + - 1. He is said to have healed a **paralyzed** man, which would show his power over the *ailments/frailty of the human body*, in front of a multitude of people, including scribes and Pharisees from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem (**Luke 5:17-25**).

* + - * 1. Apparently, as is true in small towns, word spread fast about Jesus’ power to heal.
				2. So, a large crowd is claimed to have seen this amazing miracle!
			1. Jesus was also said to have **raised the dead daughter** of Jarius, a **ruler of the Jewish synagogue**, amidst a great multitude of people (**Mark 5:22-24, 35, 38-42**).

* + - * 1. This is a significant claim because:

It claims that like God even *life and death* were under his control

It claims to involve a significant person among the Jews and many witnesses!

* + - * 1. How many rulers of the one synagogue would there have been in such a small town?
			1. Jesus also exorcised demons, healed all types of sickness and disease, gave sight to two blind men, and healed one who was mute!

* + 1. Think about the place and setting where these miracles are claimed to have happened and think about how easy it would have been to debunk them…if they were fabricated!
	1. **Miracles in Bethsaida**:

* + 1. Bethsaida:
			1. Located around **5-6 miles northeast of Capernaum** and 91 miles from Jerusalem.

* + - 1. Here Jesus is also said to have performed several miracles.
		1. Miracles:
			1. Jesus healed the sick that were part of a “great multitude” who were following him (**Matt. 14:13-14** – “When Jesus heard *it,* He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. **14** And when Jesus went out He saw a **great multitude**; and He was moved with compassion for them, and **healed their sick**.”).

* + - 1. Jesus is also said to have fed **5000 men**, not including women and children, with only five loaves and two fish (**Matt. 14:19-21** – “Then He commanded the **multitudes** to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. 20 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. 21 Now those who had eaten were about **five thousand men, besides women and children**.”).

* + - * 1. This miracle claims that Jesus had **divine creative power**—He was not limited by earthly resources, but created His own, as only God can do.
				2. Here it is claimed that hundreds, or even thousands, in this small area saw Jesus healings, while easily 15,000 would have **experienced** being miraculously fed!

* + - * 1. Fabricating such a miracle as this would have been foolhardy seeing whether it happened or not would have been common knowledge among the Jews!

* + 1. Again, if these were made up, why did people not disgrace those that wrote and preached these things by proving their claims false in quick and easy fashion?
	1. **Miracle in Gennesaret**:

* + 1. Gennesaret was about **3 miles southwest of Capernaum** and about 82 miles from Jerusalem.

* + 1. Here Jesus is said to have performed **multiple healing miracles,** proving his power of the frailties of life, before a great multitude of people (**Matt. 15:29-30** – “Departing from there, Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up on the mountain, He was sitting there. 30 And **large crowds** came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and **He healed them**.”).

* + 1. Here it is also claimed that Jesus fed **4000 men**, besides women and children, with seven loaves and a few fish, again displaying **His divine creative power** (cite **Matt. 15:34-38**).

* + - 1. This is said to have happened only about 9 miles from Bethsaida where it is claimed that Jesus had fed 5000 men, not counting women and children!

* + - 1. This was part of a three-day event where Jesus had been teaching these great crowds, indicating this was not some quick event that might be difficult to verify.

* + - 1. And, like the other event of this type, there could have *easily* been 12,000 people who experienced it!

* + 1. Jesus did other public miracles here as well.

CONCLUSION:

1. If the claims concerning Jesus’ miracles are false, then the apostles are frauds with sinister motives seeking…
	1. **Acceptance of a false Chris**t. Yet if so, why would they have believed that the Jews, among whom Christianity began, would have accepted such outrageous and unprovable claims?
	2. **Personal gain**. If so, why were they willing to live as outcast, often in poverty, and die for what they proclaimed?
2. If these claims were false, why did the Jews come to faith though the apostles’, etc., preaching of Jesus, seeing they of all people would have known these claims to be false?
3. I hope this lesson has helped guide you in the right direction when it comes to the proof for Jesus as the Christ and has strengthened your faith as well.
	1. If you are a Christian and your faith has waived, and maybe you have sinned and brought reproach on Christ and His church, I would encourage you to come today in repentance, seeking forgiveness in the grace of Christ.
	2. If you are not a Christian, will you choose Jesus today in F-R-C-BP and be saved today?