

Biblical Theological Seminary
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ST851 THE MIRACULOUS & THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

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I. THE MIRACULOUS

A. DEFINITION OF MIRACLE

1. English Definition

(*Webster's New World Dictionary*, 1966)

An event or action that apparently contradicts known scientific laws."

Not too bad, but eliminates striking providences
(e.g., Num 11:31: quail blown into camp)

2. Biblical Terminology

(numbers indicate approx frequency in OT or NT)

a. Terms expressing the wondrous/marvelous aspect

𐤍𐤒𐤒𐤓 *mofet* (35x) wonder, miracle, sign

𐤍𐤒𐤒𐤒𐤓𐤗 *niflaot* (45x) wonder, marvel, miracle,
hidden

𐤒𐤒𐤓 *pele'* (13x) wonderful, wonder, marvelous
things

𐤒𐤒𐤍 *temach* (Aramaic, 3x) - wonders

τέρας *teras* (LXX 40x, NT 16x) - wonder, portent,
prodigy (never occurs alone in NT)

b. Terms expressing the power involved

δύναμις *dunamis* (170x) power, ability,
miracle, wonderful, mighty works;
common in LXX, 500x, but only used once
for miracle!

c. Terms expressing the significance of the miracle

𐤍𐤒𐤒 'ot (80x) sign, mark, token, miracle,
ensign

σημεῖον *semeion* (75x) sign, miracle, token,
wonder; common in LXX, 90x, but often
translates *mofet*, *pele'*, *temach* as well
as 'ot

3. A Suggested Biblical Definition

"A Biblical miracle is a striking or wonderful event, displaying supernatural power and intended to carry a certain significance."

B. OLD TESTAMENT MIRACLES

a quick tour of the nature and purpose of OT miracles

1. Creation (Gen 1-3)

numerous events seem to involve the miraculous, even though humans not present

2. Flood (Gen 6-9)

judgment with deliverance

3. Patriarchal Period

a. Babel (Gen 11) - judgment

b. Abraham

1) Flaming torch (Gen 15:17)

covenant, revelation

2) Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen 18-19)

judgment w/ deliverance

3) Isaac's birth (Gen 18, 21)

promise

c. Joseph's dreams (Gen 37, 40-41)

deliverance, attestation

4. Mosaic Period

a. Burning bush (Ex 3)

revelation, promise, deliverance

b. Moses' signs (Ex 4) - staff, hand

attestation of message, messenger

c. The Plagues (Ex 7-12)

attestation (A), judgment (J), deliverance (D)

1) Water to blood J-7:16; A-7:17

2) Frogs J-8:2; A-8:9

3) Gnats/Lice J-8:15-16; A-8:18-19

4) Insects (8:20ff)

5) Pestilence on livestock (9:3ff)

note distinction betw Egyptians, Israelites

6) Boils (9:8ff) A-9:11

note esp 9:13-16 - reason for slow escalation

- 7) Hail (9:18ff)
 - no hail in Goshen
 - those who believed God found shelter
 - 8) Locusts (10:4-19)
 - 9) Darkness (10:21-24)
 - 10) Death of firstborn (Ex 11-12)
 - d. Crossing Red Sea (Ex 14)
 - deliverance and judgment
 - e. Provision in Wilderness
 - 1) Cloud - guidance, protection, attestation
 - 2) Manna, water, quail - provision
 - 3) Clothing, sandals (Dt 29:5) - provision
 - 4) Sinai events - revelation, attestation, covenant
 - 5) Amalek defeated (Ex 17) - JAD
 - 6) Korah, Dathan, Abiram destroyed (Num 16) - JA
 - 7) Aaron's rod (Num 17) - A
5. Conquest of Canaan
- a. Crossing Jordan (Josh 3)
 - attestation 3:10-13, 4:6-7, 22-24
 - provision 3:15
 - b. Jericho (Josh 2, 6) - judgment, deliverance
 - c. Sun at Gibeon (Josh 10) - JA
6. Period of Judges
- a. Angel of Lord (2) - revelation
 - b. Gideon's fleece (6) - attestation
 - c. Samson (13-16) - judgment, deliverance
7. Kingdom Period
- a. Birth of Samuel? (1 Sam 1) - attestation?
 - b. Samuel's vision (3) - revelation, attestation?
 - c. Ark among Philistines (5-6)
 - revelation, attestation to pagans
 - phenomena surrounding return esp interesting
 - d. Call of Saul (10) - attestation (10:7)
 - e. Jonathan's exploits (14) - att (14:8-10)
 - f. David & Goliath (17) - JDA
 - g. Disaster moving ark (2 Sam 6) - J
 - h. Cloud in temple (1 Kings 8) - A
 - i. Sign to Jeroboam (13) - A-13:3
 - j. Sign to Abijah (14) -J-14:6-11; A-14:12,17

- k. Ministry of Elijah (1 K 17 - 2 K 2)
 - 1) Drought (17-18) - JA
 - 2) Ravens (17) - provision
 - 3) Replenished food (17) - provision, A
 - 4) Resurrection of widow's son (17)
deliverance, attestation
 - 5) Fire on Mt Carmel (18) - A
 - 6) Run to Jezreel (18) - provision? A?
 - 7) Manifestation at Sinai (19)
revelation, provision
 - 8) Deliverance of Ahab from Syrians (20)
deliverance
 - 9) Fire falls on soldiers (2 K 1)
judgment, attestation
 - 10) Elijah's ascent (2 K 2)
includes opening of Jordan
attestation?
- l. Ministry of Elisha (2 K 2-13)
 - 1) Opening of Jordan (2) - A
 - 2) Healing water (2) - provision, A
 - 3) Two bears (2) - judgment, A
 - 4) Water-filled valley (3) - JDA
 - 5) Multiplication of oil (4) - provision
 - 6) Raising Shunemite's son (4) - D
 - 7) Canceling poison (4) - provision
 - 8) Multiplication of loaves (4) - provision
 - 9) Healing of Naaman (5) - deliverance,
attestation to pagan
 - 10) Floating axe-head (6) - D
 - 11) Heavenly army (6) - A
 - 12) Blinding Syrians (6) - DA
 - 13) Prediction of plenty (7) - A
 - 14) Resurrection touching bones (13) - DA
- m. Uzziah's leprosy (2 Chr 26) - JA
- n. Assyrian army devastated (2 K 19) - JDA
- o. Hezekiah healed (2 K 20) - D
- p. Sun's shadow reverses (20) - A

8. Babylonian Captivity

- a. Daniel interprets dream (Dan 2) - RA
- b. Fiery furnace (3) - DA
- c. Nebuchadnezzar's madness (4) - JRA
- d. Handwriting on wall (5) - JRA
- e. Daniel in lions' den (6) - DA

9. Summary: Themes in OT Miracles
 - a. Attestation of messenger
Moses w/ rod & hand, Joshua opening Jordan,
Prophet and splitting altar
 - b. Attestation of God
Return of ark, Fire from heaven, Daniel's interpretation
 - c. Judgment (on false belief, sinful practice)
Flood, Babel, Egyptian plagues, drought
 - d. Protection & Deliverance
Some Egyptian plagues (5,9 for Israel; 7,10 for any obedient)
Crossing Red Sea, Judges
 - e. Picturing God's nature
(blessings & curses of covenant)
Wilderness provisions (4e)
Holiness of ark (7c, 7g)
 - f. Carrying out God's program
Abraham, Exodus, Elijah

C. NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES

1. Miracles of Jesus
 - a. His birth
 - b. His ministry
will return to these for bulk of course
 - c. His resurrection & ascension

EXCURSUS

some items to consider in interpreting Jesus' miracles
(use these in constructing your term paper)

1. Historicity of particular miracle
 - a. Occasion
 - b. Liberal explanation(s)
 - c. Evidence of historicity
 - d. Reaction of eyewitnesses
2. Old Testament background
 - a. Try to imagine how it would strike original observers
 - b. Try to forget you have heard story 50 times
 - c. Try to forget later miracles of Jesus, incl. resurrection & later NT teaching
 - d. What OT miracles are recalled by this one?
 - e. What OT teachings are exemplified by miracle?
 - f. How do Jesus' actions parallel and contrast with those of OT prophets?

3. Significance of miracle
 - a. Immediate effect of miracle
 - b. Place of miracle in salvation history
 - 1) relation to creation
 - 2) relation to ministry of Jesus
 - 3) relation to eschaton
 - c. Symbolic elements?

2. Apostolic Miracles

specific miracles narrated in Acts, not counting general comments in 2:43;

5:12-16; 6:8; 8:6-7; 19:11-12 and 2 Cor 12:12

- a. Pentecost (Acts 2) (Jesus) - fulfillment, attestation
- b. Healing lame beggar (3) (Peter) - deliverance
- c. Death of Ananias & Sapphira (5) (Peter) - judgment
- d. Apostles rescued from prison (5) (angel) - deliverance
- e. HS to Samaritans (8) (Peter & John) - fulfillment, attestation
- f. Guidance & Transport of Philip (8) (HS) - revelation, ministry
- g. Conversion of Paul (9) (Jesus) - deliverance
- h. Healing paralytic Aeneas (9) (Peter) - deliverance, attestation
- i. Resurrection of Dorcas (9) (Peter) - deliverance, attestation
- j. Conversion of Cornelius (10) (angel) - deliverance, attestation
- k. Famine prophecy (11) (Agabus) - revelation
- l. Peter rescued from prison (12) (angel) - deliverance
- m. Death of Herod Agrippa I (12) (angel) - judgment
- n. Elymas struck blind (13) (Paul) - judgment, attestation
- o. Lame man healed at Lystra (14) (Paul) - deliverance
- p. Macedonian vision (16) (?) - revelation
- q. Demonized girl at Philippi (16) (Paul) - deliverance
- r. Earthquake, Philippian prison (16) (?) - deliverance, attestation
- s. Vision at Corinth (18) (Lord) - revelation
- t. HS on followers of Jn Bapt (19) (HS) - fulfillment, attestation
- u. Demonic attack on sons of Sceva (19) (Satan) - judgment?
- v. Resurrection of Eutychus (20) (Paul) - deliverance
- w. Arrest prophecy (21) (Agabus) - revelation
- x. Vision at Jerusalem (23) (Lord) - revelation
- y. Vision re/ shipwreck (27) (angel) - revelation
- z. Paul not hurt by snake (27) (Paul) - deliverance, attestation
- aa. Healings on Malta (28) (Paul) - deliverance, attestation

SOME OBSERVATIONS: No clear evidence in Acts of decrease in miraculous toward end of book. Probably all of the miracles of judgment and deliverance have some function as attestation for the miracle worker or for the Gospel and the Christian church.

D. MIRACLE ACCOUNTS IN THE NT APOCRYPHA

See (1) Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924. (2) Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*. 2 vols. Edited by Wilhelm Schneemelcher, translated by R. McL. Wilson. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963, 1965.

1. The Protoevangelium of James

A narration of the events supposed to have taken place up to the birth of Jesus; probably written in mid to late 2nd cen AD; very influential in development of devotion to Mary.

- ch 1: Joachim, rich and pious Jew, has offerings rejected because he is childless; goes into wilderness to fast 40 days.
- ch 2-3: His wife, Anna, also reproached, prays to God for child.
- ch 4-5: Angel sent to Anna and Joachim, announcing answer to their prayers C offspring shall be spoken of in whole world; Mary born.
- ch 6: Mary walks at six months, kept at home in special sanctuary to avoid all defilement.
- ch 7: Mary dedicated to temple at age three, dances on steps of altar.
- ch 8: At age 12, to avoid [menstrual] defilement of temple, high priest Zecharias instructed by angel to give Mary as wife to widower whom God shall designate.
- ch 9: Joseph chosen by dove coming out of his staff; takes Mary home. Goes off on building project.
- ch 10-12: Mary one of virgins chosen to make veil of temple. Mary receives message from angel re/ Jesus. Turns in veil work, visits Elizabeth.
- ch 13-16: Mary, 16, now six months pregnant when Joseph returns, who won't believe her story until angel appears to him. Her pregnancy becomes known to priests, who call both in. They won't believe their stories until they are successful in bitter water test.
- ch 17-18: Decree of Augustus. Mary and Joseph and his kids go to Bethlehem, but she is about to give birth in wilderness, so put in cave. As Joseph goes to look for midwife, whole world halts at Jesus' birth.
- ch 19-20: Joseph and midwife see cloud overshadow cave, then great light; baby climbs up on Mary's breast. Midwife tells friend Salome, who won't believe in virgin birth until she tests Mary's virginity. Salome's hand consumed as punishment, but healed by touching baby Jesus.
- ch 21: Visit of wise men.
- ch 22-24: Herod tries to kill young children. Mary hides baby in ox-manger. Elizabeth and John hidden by being swallowed up inside mountain. Herod finds Zecharias in temple, has him killed. His blood turns to stone, the temple walls wail. Symeon appointed high priest in Z's place.
- ch 25: I, James [Jesus' older step-brother] wrote this, hid in wilderness.

2. The Infancy Story of Thomas (formerly called Gospel of Thomas)

A narration of the marvels which supposedly took place in Jesus' childhood up to age 12; parts date back to late 2nd cen AD.

- ch 1: Written by Thomas the Israelite [though Cullmann says "his book betrays no knowledge of Judaism"].
- ch 2: Boy Jesus, age 5, makes 12 clay sparrows on the Sabbath. When confronted, he claps hands and sparrows fly away.
- ch 3: Another boy messes up pools Jesus playing in. He curses boy, who immediately withers up. Parents of boy complain to Joseph, "What kind of child do you have?"
- ch 4-5: Another boy runs into Jesus in village. Jesus curses him and he falls dead. Parents and others complain to Joseph, he rebukes child. Jesus strikes accusers blind. Joseph pulls Jesus' ear. Jesus warns Joseph not to cross him.
- ch 6-8: Teacher Zacchaeus offers to teach Jesus alphabet, but Jesus rebukes him for not really understanding even Alpha. Zacchaeus, shamed, says this child not earth-born, perhaps begotten before creation of world. Returns child to father. Jesus laughs, cancels curse on all those previously struck. They are afraid to provoke him again.
- ch 9: Jesus and children playing on roof of house. One falls off and dies. Parents accuse Jesus; he calls boy back to life, who clears him of responsibility.
- ch 10: Young man cutting wood chops his own foot. Jesus heals foot. "Arise now, cleave the wood, and remember me."
- ch 11: Going to fetch water for his mother, Jesus stumbles and pitcher is broken. Brings back water in his garment.
- ch 12: Jesus, age 8, planting with his father, sows one grain of wheat. It yields one hundred measures of wheat which he gives to the poor.
- ch 13: Jesus and father making a wooden bed for a rich man. One of the beams is too short. Jesus stretches it to right length.
- ch 14-15: Another teacher strikes Jesus. Jesus curses him and he falls into faint. Later another teacher takes Jesus as pupil. Jesus takes up book, but without reading it, begins to expound law by the Holy Spirit and a large crowd gathers. Teacher praises Jesus; Jesus heals previous teacher.
- ch 16: Jesus and brother James gathering sticks. James bitten by snake, about to die. Jesus breathes on bite, wound healed, snake bursts.
- ch 17: Jesus raises little child who had died.
- ch 18: Jesus raises workman who dies.
- ch 19: Jesus, 12, remains behind in temple. Parents find him expounding Scripture, putting elders and teachers to silence.

Historicity of these two apocryphal Gospels?

--Did Luke really pass up all this for temple incident at age 12?

--Does this really fit Lk 2:52?

"...in favor with God and man"

--Does this really fit Lk 4:22-23?

"...wondering at gracious words.... Isn't this Joseph's son.... do here in home town as well"

--Does this really fit Mt 13:53-58; Mk 6:16?

"...where... this wisdom and these miraculous powers? Is not this the carpenter's son?..."

--Does this fit Jn 2:11?

"...beginning of his signs..."

Influence: These two works are the basis on which various stories of Mary and Jesus are elaborated through the middle ages.

3. Other NT Apocrypha

--A number of Apocryphal Acts survive, the earliest from the 2nd and 3rd cen.:

Acts of John

Acts of Paul & Thecla

Acts of Peter

Acts of Andrew

Acts of Thomas

--these apparently seek to supplement the canonical Acts, entertain the reader, and propagandize for their own particular theological approach (Jn, And, Thos are strongly *enkratite*, breaking up marriages and advocating eating only bread & water; cp 1 Tim 4:3)

--in the apocryphal Acts, "miraculous stories are not only much exaggerated, producing fantastic and bizarre effects, but they often follow one another as isolated units and are retailed for their own sake. The intention of this is clearly not that of demonstrating the wonderful advance of the Word of God but... to glorify the apostles as miracle-workers." (Hennecke, 2:174)

E. SOME POST-APOSTOLIC & MEDIEVAL MIRACLE ACCOUNTS

Source: E. Cobham Brewer, *A Dictionary of Miracles*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1884. xliv + 582 pp. 47 pp index.

A compilation of hundreds of ancient, medieval and modern miracle accounts categorized alphabetically under three major headings: (1) those imitating biblical miracles; (2) those illustrating biblical texts; (3) those "proving" Roman Catholic dogma. The accounts are taken from standard Roman Catholic sources: *Acta Sanctorum*; Guérin, *Les Petits Bollandistes*; Kinsman, *Lives of the Saints*.

1. Some Miracle Accounts Imitating Biblical Miracles

236 headings covering 346 double-column pages

a. Apparitions of Angels and Saints (15-28):

St. Barnabas says where his dead body is to be found. Barnabas the apostle, after being stoned to death, was thrown into a fierce fire, that his body might be consumed; but the fire had no effect upon it, and St. Mark, carrying the dead body beyond the gates of the city wall of Cyprus, buried it. There it remained till AD 485, when, Nicephorus Callistus assures us, the ghost appeared to Antemius, bishop of Cyprus, and told him where his body was to be found. The bishop went to the spot indicated, and found the body, with the original MS of St. Matthew's Gospel, the very MS written by the hand of the evangelist himself. Both relics were taken to Constantinople... (17)

b. Budding Rod (53-54):

Dead elm blooms. The bier of St. Zanolis (AD 407) happened, in passing, to touch an elm tree, dead and withered to the roots from old age. The moment it did so the whole tree burst into leaf, and was covered with flowers. This tree was looked on by the people with such reverence that everyone coveted a piece as a charmed relic, and the tree ere long was wholly cut away. A marble pillar was then erected on the spot, with an inscription stating what has been said above. When the bier reached the doorway of St. Savior's Cathedral, it became immovable, and no power of man could force it further on, till bishop Andrew promised to found twelve chaplains to chant the praises of God in the chapel designed for the dead saint. (54)

c. Dead hearing, speaking, and moving (75-78)

Relics join in singing. One night a deacon watched St. Gregory of Langres (AD 541), and saw him rise from his bed, and leave his dormitory at midnight. The deacon followed him unobserved, and saw him enter the baptistery, the door of which opened to him of its own accord. For a time dead silence prevailed, and then St. Gregory began to chant. Presently a host of voices joined in, and the singing continued for three hours. "I think," says St. Gregory of Tours, naively, "the voices proceeded from the holy relics there preserved; no doubt they revealed themselves to the saint, and joined him in singing praises to God." (76-77)

d. Relics (257-75)

Some items from a list of relics given by John Brady (1839), but no information supplied on location of each: (1) one of the coals that broiled St. Lawrence; (2) a finger of St. Andrew, another of John the Baptist, and one of the Holy Ghost; (3) two heads of John the Baptist; (4) the hem of our Lord's garment touched by the woman healed of her bloody issue; (5) a vial of the sweat of St. Michael, when he

contended with Satan; (6) some the rays of the star that guided the Wise Men; (7) a rib of the Word made flesh; (8) a pair of slippers worn by Enoch before the Flood; (9) a tear shed by Jesus over the grave of Lazarus.

2. Some Miracle Accounts Illustrating Biblical Texts

146 headings covering 128 double-column pages

a. Out of the mouth of babes (Ps 8:2, etc.) (355-57)

When St. Agnes died (April 20, 1317), we are told by her biographer she received the most perfect praise this earth could afford, that of infants at the breast. The tongue of little infants was unloosed, and they announced the death of St. Agnes and her virtues, and their parents woke on hearing their voices. (356)

b. God will provide (Mt 6:25-33) (398-99)

St. Franchy (7th cen) was employed in making bread for the monastery of St. Martin de la Bretonniere, but some of the brothers, out of envy, wishing to bring him into disgrace, hid the materials used in bread making. St. Franchy was not in the least disconcerted, but making the sign of the cross, began to knead nothing with nothing, and at the time required produced his batch of bread in perfect condition. (398)

c. Holiness better than rubies (Prov 3:15, etc.)

The body of Simeon Stylites (AD 459) was full of sores covered with maggots. One day a maggot fell from the pillar-saint at the foot of Basilicus, king of the Saracens, and the king, picking it up, laid it on his eye, whereupon it was instantly converted into a magnificent pearl, so large, so beautiful, and of such fine water, that Basilicus valued it more than his whole empire. (415)

3. Some Miracle Accounts "Proving" Catholic Dogma

20 headings covering 52 double-column pages

a. Body and Blood of Christ (489-95)

St. Antony of Padua had a disputation one day with Boniville on the sacrament of the mass. Boniville denied transubstantiation, and Antony maintained its truth. To convince him, St. Antony had Boniville shut up his mule and give it no food for three days. At the end of this fast, St. Antony held out to the mule a consecrated wafer, and Boniville threw it some oats. The mule took no notice of the oats, but fell on its knees before the holy wafer, adoring it as its Creator and Lord. (490)

b. Purgatory (513-16)

Emilia Bicchieri (13th cen) was the superior of the convent of St. Margaret, and compelled the sisters on fast-days to abstain even from drinking water, in remembrance of Christ's thirst. One of the sisters, Cecily Margaret, died. Three

days afterwards she showed herself to Emilia, and said she had been in purgatory for three days to efface the taint of birth, and on the third day her guardian angel appeared to her and said, "With this water you abstained from on earth, in memory of Christ's thirst, the flames of purgatory are extinguished. Enter, therefore, now into the joys of paradise." (514)

c. Virgin Mary (516-30)

St. John Damascene and Juvenal, archbishop of Jerusalem, assert that Adam and Eve, the prophets, all the apostles except Thomas, and many angels, were present at the death of the Virgin Mary, and attended the funeral procession to Gethsemane. On the third day after her interment came St. Thomas, and entreated that he might be allowed to look upon the deceased lady; so the grave was opened, when lo! the body was gone. It had been taken to heaven. The odor of sanctity remained in the place where the body had lain, and the linen clothes, in which it had been wrapped, had been carefully folded together. The apostles were amazed, but they knew that the body had been taken up to heaven to be united to its living soul. Juvenal continues, "There can be no doubt about this fact; for not only the apostles saw that the body was gone, the same was seen by St. Timothy, bishop of Ephesus, Dionysius the Areopagite, the divine Hierotheus, and many other saints." (518)

4. Some Implications of the Miracles Recorded in Brewer
(selected and reorganized from his pp xix-xxiii)

These miracles C if they truly occurred and were done by God C attest to the truth of distinctive Roman Catholic doctrines:

The world is divided into two kingdoms: God's kingdom, the Catholic Church, which one enters on baptism by renouncing Satan; and Satan's kingdom, which includes not only pagans and Muslims, but also Jews and Protestants. It is meritorious for saints to injure heretics such as Lutherans and Calvinists, but a sin if the opposite occurs. There is no salvation outside the church of Rome. Its priests can actually absolve you from your sins. Its baptism regenerates. The elements of the eucharist really are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and can function as miraculous food.

It is wrong for civil magistrates to punish crimes by imprisonment. All punishment should be left to God and His Church. In the person of the pope, the Church may issue anathemas, publish interdicts against whole nations for the offenses of an individual, release subjects from allegiance, dethrone princes, organize wars against heretics and infidels, annul marriages, propagate new articles of faith, grant indulgences, open or close heaven, canonize saints, authenticate relics and miracles, determine what is heresy and orthodoxy, and speak with an infallible voice.

Salvation is the reward of merit, hence the common end to saintly biographies: "He was called to

heaven to receive the reward of his merits."

The lives of saints are considered the romantic ideals of perfection, including withdrawal from society, mortification of the flesh, self-torment, suffering and martyrdom. One of the most meritorious acts of piety is to remain single. It is possible to be meritorious, to accumulate merit, to transfer merit to others, so that the demerits of a sinner may be balanced off by transfer from a saint.

Those to whom Christ gives light within often show it by radiant looks, luminous bodies, nimbus and glory. Sometimes this light neutralizes gravity, so the saint is buoyed up in the air like a balloon. Christ frequently visits saints on earth, usually as a little child.

Monks and nuns, as a rule, are the elect and beloved children of God, certain of paradise, though perhaps having to undergo a time in purgatory. This time may be shortened by one's prayers, gifts, and penances while living, or by those of a substitute after death. Indulgences may be purchased to shorten the time in purgatory, or even to buy it off altogether. To break a monastic vow and return to secular life is to be a child of the devil; exorcism is usually necessary before such a one can be restored. It is meritorious to torment the body in all possible ways: by filth, by standing for many years, by not lying down to sleep, by insufficient or unwholesome food, by scourging, by irons, by wearing hair shirts, by never changing one's linen, by producing sores, etc. Those who torment themselves the most are the most holy.

Blind obedience to superiors is the first law of piety, no matter how absurd the order, how revolting, how difficult. The perfection of a saint comes when he has crushed out every natural affection. Nothing on earth must remain C its hopes, ambitions, loves C not even love to father and mother. A saint should read no secular book, think no secular thought, hope no secular good.

It is a proof of merit to be able to work miracles. It is meritorious to see miracles and believe in them, or at least a demerit to doubt them. Miracles can be performed by dead bodies, relics, and medals, as well as by living saints.

Relics can be authenticated by any Church dignitary, such as pope, abbot or bishop. They can even be multiplied. They possess miraculous virtues no matter how small they are, which can be transferred, so that a relic can make a relic. Saints, after death, have the power of interceding for their votaries before the throne of grace, of curing diseases, and of visiting earth. The Virgin Mary is the highest of all saints, the most powerful, and the most merciful. The saints in heaven take an interest in those on earth. They like to be invoked, patronized, honored, flattered, and even be dressed up and decked with jewels.

The signing of the cross with the finger or otherwise acts as a charm or talisman to drive away or ward off devils, sickness, floods, storms, darkness, or other evils natural or supernatural.

Sickness, as a rule, is the work of the devil, and exorcism cures the sick. Death, as a rule, does

not seem to be attributed to Satan, but Satanic malice is usually the cause of falling, shipwreck, injury or death from falling chimneys, trees or walls.

The soul may become visible at death, and is often seen making its way out of the mouth of saints, either like a dove, a beam of light, or some other material object. It is carried by angels to heaven or by devils to hell, unless the soul is doomed to a period in purgatory.

F. SCIENCE & THE RISE OF LIBERALISM

1. The Renaissance

A rediscovery of the Greek classical authors in western Europe as the result of the fall of Constantinople to the Islamic Turks and the fleeing of its refugees to the West.

Europeans became aware of what these ancient authors really thought and taught, as opposed to the very distorted information which had come down through the Middle Ages or the less distorted material transmitted from Spain via Arabic translations.

This material included philosophy, science, ethics, history, government, medicine, rhetoric, drama, poetry, but also pagan religion and magic.

The upshot was a great stimulus to the European universities, with a growing interest in the ancient languages Greek and Hebrew. It helped the Europeans to see their own culture in a wider context than medieval Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, but also re-introduced a number of ancient heresies. Scholars became aware of the nature of miracle accounts from ancient paganism.

2. The Reformation

A rediscovery of the Gospel of God's grace which had been thoroughly confused and diluted by centuries of ignorance of God's Word, partly due to low levels of literacy, partly to syncretism with local paganisms and worldly society, and partly to institutional momentum of the Catholic Church and monasticism.

This led to a renewed interest in what the Bible actually taught, as opposed to how it had come to be understood through the filter of centuries of medieval Catholicism.

One result of this study was a realization that medieval and modern Catholic miracles had a different flavor than those of the Bible. Since Catholicism taught that miracles continued in connection with the lives of especially holy people, there was a tendency to reject the continuation of miracle.

3. Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler

Some of the medieval universities had done rather impressive work in physics, showing that Aristotle was mistaken about the motion of objects on earth, but it was the work of Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler which showed that Aristotle's earth-centered cosmology was wrong and paved the way for the rise of modern science.

Nicolas Copernicus (1473-1543), aware of the astronomical speculation of the ancient world, noted that a great simplification of the technique for calculating the positions of the planets could be obtained if it was assumed they rotated about the sun rather than the earth.

Galileo (1564-1642), the first to apply the newly-invented telescope to looking at the heavens, showed that neither the sun nor moon were perfect, as Aristotle had claimed, and that a "planetary system" of moons revolved about the planet Jupiter, so that everything did not revolve around the earth.

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) used the vast observational data compiled by his mentor Tycho Brahe to show that the planets did indeed revolve around the sun, and that their motions could be described by several laws.

4. Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

Newton, one of the most brilliant minds in history, designed a new type of telescope, discovered that a glass prism will separate white light into its various colored components, invented a new type of mathematics (calculus), and showed that Kepler's laws of planetary motions could be explained by (1) a very general set of laws of motion which applied to all objects on earth as well, plus (2) a force called gravity which attracts all massive objects to one another. The famous contemporary poet, Alexander Pope, wrote of him,

Nature, and nature's laws, lay hid in night;
God said, 'Let Newton be!' and all was light.

Newton himself was a professing Christian (albeit of an Arian sort); he believed in God the Creator who could miraculously intervene in nature, and he spent a good deal of his time researching biblical prophecy. But many who came after him felt that he had explained so much of reality in terms of law that God was not needed. This led to the deist movement in England and later the *philosophé* movement in France, which was popularized by the authors of the great French Encyclopedia.

5. Spinoza, Hume, and Kant

Three men also paved the way for theological liberalism by providing philosophical

justification for the rejection of the miraculous. We will look at their arguments in greater detail later.

Benedict Spinoza (1632-77), adopting a pantheistic outlook, argued that nature and God were two different words for the same thing; that natural law and God's decree were likewise the same; that God's decrees are unchangeable, and therefore miracles are impossible by definition.

David Hume (1711-76) attacked miracles from an empirical point of view. He argued that our natural laws are based on "firm and unalterable experience," and that miracles by definition violate natural law. Therefore we ought never to accept a miraculous explanation for an event unless a non-miraculous explanation would be even more unlikely.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) argued that man has access only to appearances and not to things as they really are, so that all theology and metaphysics was unwarranted speculation. Only practical reason had a right to postulate the existence of God, freedom, and immortality, leading to a moral religion of duty only. Such a religion (a form of Deism) needs no attestation by miracles, which are thus irrelevant to everyday life except perhaps to encourage the common people to practice morality when they cannot be brought to do so from better motives.

6. Theological Liberalism

Theological liberalism, as we call it today, is an outgrowth within Protestant circles of the forces sketched above: (1) a Protestant revulsion against Catholic miracle accounts; (2) a scientific disdain for reports of irregular and superstitious events; (3) a philosophical feeling that miracles are either deductively impossible, inductively unwarranted, or practically irrelevant; and (4) a Deistic belief that real religion was moral rather than revelational.

Theological liberalism arose in 19th century Germany as a "more Christian" alternative to British Deism and French Atheism, seeking to preserve the moral character of Christianity and the "better teachings" of the Bible, especially the New Testament and the life of Jesus. It is seen in the attempts to rewrite the life of Christ along liberal lines; to avoid the miraculous in sacred history by redating biblical books, by postulating diverse sources and editors, by having prophecy written after the event, and by admitting fictitious narratives and false authorship into Scripture.

Liberalism spread from Germany into Britain and the United States in the latter part of the 19th century, with considerable help from Darwinism, and came to dominate first the universities, then the theological seminaries, and finally the mainline denominations. It is the "orthodoxy" of most intellectual and cultural leaders in the US and Europe today, and is influential in similar circles in most of the older

mission fields.

Though never so popular among the common people in the US as among the leadership, and currently under attack from Eastern and New Age religions, it still exercises considerable influence by way of mixture even among more conservative Christian groups. Various cults and New Age groups have accepted many of its teachings, and orthodox Christians have often over-reacted in responding to liberalism.

G. ANSWERING LIBERAL OBJECTIONS TO THE MIRACULOUS

see Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind* (Baker, 1992); Robert C. Newman, "The Biblical Narratives of Easter Week" IBRI RR #1; and Newman, "Gospel History Syllabus"; Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Eerdmans, 1984).

1. The Deductive Impossibility of Miracles (Spinoza)

a. Geisler's version of Spinoza:

- 1) Miracles are violations of natural law.
- 2) Natural laws are immutable.
- 3) It is impossible to violate immutable laws.
- 4) Therefore, miracles are impossible

b. Critique of Spinoza:

- 1) Probably some miracles are violations of natural law, though many of them may override natural law in some way or other, rather as we override gravity by picking up a pencil. So 1) is probably true in some cases, false in others.
- 2) This depends on what we mean by natural law. If we *define* natural law to be immutable, it may be that there is no such thing as natural law. In any case, we do not know enough to be sure that the regularities we know about in nature are immutable. And immutable to whom? Obviously humans cannot change the constant of gravitation or suspend Newton's laws of motion, but it is not obvious that God cannot.
- 3) Statement 3) is true so long as we qualify it by saying "It is impossible for someone to violate laws which are immutable to them."
- 4) If 1) is not true in some cases, and 2) may be either an empty class or not immutable to God, it follows that Spinoza's argument is not sound.

c. Another Deductive Formulation

- 1) A miracle is a violation of natural law.
- 2) To violate a law is to be illegal, immoral, irrational or gauche.
- 3) God is not illegal, immoral, irrational or gauche.
- 4) Therefore, God (at least) cannot do miracles, though perhaps Satan could!

d. Response

- 1) Same problems as Spinoza's 1).
- 2) Statement 2) assumes natural law can be fitted into one of the categories of civil law, moral law, logical law, or aesthetic law. But this does not follow. To violate a natural law is merely to be miraculous, which the God of the Bible is regularly pictured as.
- 3) Granted.
- 4) The problems with 1) and especially 2) invalidate the argument.

2. The Inductive Improbability of Miracles (Hume)

a. Newman's version of Hume:

- 1) Experience is our only guide to all decisions regarding matters of fact.
- 2) The laws of nature are established by a firm and unalterable experience.
- 3) Our belief in the reliability of witnesses is based on their reports usually agreeing with the facts.
- 4) Miracles are violations of natural law.
- 5) Thus miracles go against the very evidence by which we determine matters of fact.
- 6) One should not accept testimony regarding a miracle unless all the alternatives would be more miraculous than the miracle itself.

b. Response to Hume:

- 1) This is a pure empiricist statement of how we know.

EXCURSUS ON KNOWING

See discussion in Dunzweiler and Newman, "Apologetics Syllabus," section on Epistemology.

Knowledge may be defined as "warranted true belief."

It is studied in epistemology, the philosophical discipline that asks, "How do we know?" and "What warrant do we have for our beliefs?"

Three basic ways of knowing have been proposed by various philosophers, not counting claims that we cannot know (such as Skepticism, Agnosticism, Subjectivism):

- 1) Rationalism: We know only by basic intuitions and logical deductions therefrom. Problem: How do we know our intuitions/presuppositions are true?
- 2) Empiricism: We know only by experience. Problem: How do we *know* that "we know only by experience"? Empiricism involves assumptions it cannot prove.
- 3) Rational Empiricism: We know by means of our sensory equipment (provided in advance), which processes our experience. Problem: Where did this equipment come from? Why is it basically reliable?

Some cautions re/ epistemology:

- 1) Setting the level for certainty:
 - if we set it too high, we know nothing
 - if we set it too low, we may be unable to discriminate between alternatives
- 2) Influence of worldview:
 - danger of being too gullible on solutions that favor our own worldview
 - danger of being too skeptical on solutions that don't
 - how do we test our own worldview?
- 3) Problem of data:
 - we may not have access to enough information to make a good choice of solution for some of the problems that face us
 - we may need to look for data in other places to get enough for a proper solution

-----END EXCURSUS

- 1) resumed: Yet Hume is right to ask what warrant we can put forward for belief in miracles. It must be granted that even revelation needs to be tested in some way to avoid accepting false revelations. Cp the biblical injunctions to test everything (Gal 6:19-21; 1 Jn 4:1; Deut 13:1-3; 18:18-22).
- 2) The laws of nature (defined empirically) are established by experience (observation and experiment), and must be pretty firm to be denoted "laws." Yet it is unclear in what sense the experience is "unalterable." Does Hume mean "no exceptions have ever been observed"? If so, he begs the question of the occurrence of the miraculous by secretly importing his answer into statement 2)!
- 3) Our belief in the reliability of a particular witness is somewhat more complicated than this. If he only *usually* tells the truth or makes sound judgments, we probably won't put much stock in his reports. Some combination of number of witnesses, their known character, and what they might have to gain from lying will usually figure here.
- 4) Strangely enough, 4) is true in an empirical sense where it is not as used by Spinoza in his 1). Miracles clearly go against what we normally experience.
- 5) Hume is mistaken here, once we adjust 3) as above. But he is correct in that we tend to be more skeptical in proportion to the peculiarity of the event reported (Cp report of recently seeing Tom Taylor, George Bush, Ben Franklin, or God).
- 6) Hume here guarantees that we will never accept the report of a miracle, nor probably even if we saw one ourselves, since witnesses can lie and senses can deceive. Here is the rub: Hume would have us explain away miracles even if they occur! One can set the level of certainty so high that one will never admit a miracle. A dangerous tactic!

3. The Practical Irrelevance of Miracles (Kant)

a. Newman/Geisler/Brown version of Kant's Argument:

- 1) We cannot know things as they really are, but only as they appear to us.
- 2) Therefore, any claimed knowledge of God and transcendent reality is just unwarranted speculation.
- 3) Nevertheless, in order to function practically in this world, we postulate God, freedom, and immortality as a basis for morality and duty.
- 4) Miracles either happen daily, seldom or never.
If daily, not miracle but natural law;
If seldom, no basis for knowing them.
So probably never.
- 5) True religion, consisting of fulfilling all duties as though they were divine commands, needs no miracle to do what is right. Miracles, rather, tend to corrupt one's motives.
- 6) Therefore, miracles are irrelevant to everyday life and true religion.

b. Response to Kant:

- 1) We cannot know that "we cannot know things as they really are" unless we know how they really are! Statement 1) is self-defeating.
- 2) God, who knows things as they really are, can reveal to us what we need to know along these lines, having created our capacities and knowing our limitations. Of course, not every claim to revelation is valid.
- 3) God, freedom and immortality are indeed a basis for morality and duty, but those with Kant's epistemology have no strength to stand against the forces of skepticism which deny these. See Lewis, *Pilgrim's Regress*.
- 4) Jesus probably worked miracles daily during his ministry on earth, and they have probably occurred very rarely at some other times in human history (1 Sam 3:1). We are not suggesting that we would fully understand a miracle or be absolutely certain whether an event was miraculous or not, but certain miracles exhaust the available probabilities. See Judg 6:36-40; 1 Sam 6:1-9.
- 5) True, but man is no longer capable of doing what is right, and needs a redemptive miracle of atonement and regeneration to solve this. The miracles of Scripture point to the Redeemer God who is able and willing to intervene for our salvation.
- 6) Miracles are only irrelevant to non-redemptive religions like Deism and theological liberalism, neither of which will save at the last judgement.

4. Ancient Ignorance and Miracles (Harnack)

a. Newman's version of Harnack's Argument:

- 1) People in antiquity thought that miracles occurred every day. So it is not surprising that miracles are reported in the ministry of Jesus,

the apostles, and the prophets.

2) People in antiquity did not understand nature and its laws. Therefore they regularly mistook natural events for miracles.

b. Response to Harnack:

1) There are people both in antiquity and today who believe miracles occur every day; there are others both then and now who deny miracles altogether (Epicureans, Sadducees). Probably there are more skeptics today than back then, but probably both the skeptics and the everyday miracle people are wrong. In any case, it was widely realized that John the Baptist didn't do miracles (Jn 10:41), so they didn't have to be reported of famous prophets. And the Sadducees realized that it was impossible for them to deny that Jesus had done miracles (Jn 9:18; 11:47; 12:10; cp Acts 4:16).

2) This is absurd! None of the miracles of Jesus can easily be converted into misunderstood natural events, at least not taken as a group (3 cases of misdiagnosed death that just happen to revive when Jesus shows up? Jesus walking on shore/sandbar instead of water?) Give us a break!

5. Miracles in a Closed Universe (Bultmann)

a. Newman's version of Bultmann's Argument:

1) Modern science and history operate on the assumption that our universe is a closed system of cause and effect, so that they can describe, explain and predict what is happening. Even Fundamentalists practically operate this way when they use electricity, modern medicine, and modern technology.

2) The old mythical view of nature was that God, angels, demons, etc., were the direct causes of lightning, sickness, earthquakes, storms. Today we know better.

b. Response to Bultmann:

1) Neither modern science nor history knows enough to know that the universe is a *closed* system. It appears to be a system in the sense that similar causes are operating at great distances as nearby, but we do not know how to explain its origin, nor the origin of life, nor the striking examples of apparent design in nature apart from a mind behind the universe. We certainly have no full explanations of what history is all about, nor a proof that it is meaningless. The discoveries of electricity, modern medicine and modern technology are not inconsistent with Xn theism, and many Xns were involved in their discovery.

2) Xns (and others) have sometimes imagined they knew a great deal more about what God, Satan, angels, and demons were doing than they really did, but the Bible nowhere says that God runs nature without mediation, or that Satan and demons are the sole causes of disease,

etc. We certainly do not know enough about either medicine or the weather today to say that there is never any supernatural intervention in either (much less providence).

6. Are Miracles Actual?

- a. There is good evidence for Divine intervention in creation.
 - Discussed in some detail in our Apologetics course:
 - Origin of universe
 - Design in universe
 - Correlation betw Gen 1 & origin of earth
 - Origin of life
 - Origin of major body plans in life
 - Origin of mankind
- b. There is good evidence for Divine intervention in history.
 - Discussed in some detail also in our Biblical Foundations and Synoptic Gospels courses:
 - Origin of Israel
 - Fulfilled prophecy
 - Origin of Christianity
 - Phenomena of Jesus' ministry, incl claims, miracle accounts, esp. resurrection
- c. There is good evidence for Divine intervention in the present.
 - Christians disagree on the frequency of miracle in modern times.
 - The phenomena of conversion, both on the individual and societal level, are striking.

II. THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

(numbers in parentheses are chapters in Matt, Mark, Luke, John, respectively)

A. Miracles over the Natural Realm

1. Changing the Water into Wine (0,0,0,2)

a. Historicity

Occasion

3rd day after meeting Nathaniel

Jesus invited to wedding feast where mother involved in helping?

Disciples probably invited because of connection w/ Jesus

Liberal explanation:

Jesus' presence made water taste like wine

Evidence of historicity

date, location, details given, incl number, type and size of pots used

remarks of Mary, Jesus, ruler of feast

non-spectacular nature of presentation

Reaction of eyewitnesses

not narrated: only remarks of ruler on wine quality and indication that servants knew source

disciples believe (11)

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

No wine miracles, tho wine used in drink offering, feasting, and in Passover by NT times

Transformation miracles

water => blood (Ex 7)

healing water (2 Kings 2)

canceling poison (2 Kings 4)

Other parallels: Creation and providence of God

Ps 104:15 - God produces wine

c. Significance

Immediate effect

to spare embarrassment to hosts

to give valuable present to bride & groom (ave wine worth 2 denarii/amphora, so 30 denarii here at least)

Place in salvation history

Beginning of Jesus' miracles

Jesus begins to show His glory

(glory like Father's, who creates wine? Ps 104)

Disciples (in some sense) believe

Symbolic Elements?

Jesus provides joy of feast (Messianic banquet?)

2. Miraculous Catch (0,0,5,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

After beginning of publ ministry in Galilee, incl teaching in synagogues, casting out demons, etc.

Already great multitudes flock to Jesus

Inconvenience of this leads to using boat as speaking platform

Disciples had been fishing all prev night w/o success

Liberal explanations

An allegory rather than historical: first hint of Gentiles receiving Gospel

If historical, Jesus saw fish, told disciples [but see Excursus, below]

Evidence of historicity

Particulars of persons, number of boats, details of fishing

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Not clear whether crowd still around

Peter struck w/ own sin when he realizes what this tells him about Jesus

(cp OT theophanies)

Disciples leave all and follow Him

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

Moving a fish - Jonah

Moving a multitude of animals: Egyptian plagues, quail in wilderness

Other parallels: Fish in OT

Man made to rule fish (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:8), but instead they fear and flee him (Gen 9:2)

Fish in hand of God (Jer 12:8ff)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Fishermen get spectacular haul

Shown something about Jesus

Place in salvation history

Jesus to restore what Adam lost, here seen in dominion over fish

Symbolic Elements

Fish cp to men; disciples cp fisherman

Similar to dragnet parable in Mt 13

As God controls success in fishing, so in saving people

d. Problems

Same as call in Mt 4:18ff; Mk 1:16-20?

Relation to catch in John 21?

EXCURSIS: How far from the boat can one see fish under water?

Light bends when it passes from water to air. Recall how a stick stuck into water appears to bend at the surface. There is also a critical angle at the air/water interface. If one looks more steeply into the water than this, one can see beneath the surface. If one looks at a shallower angle, all one sees is reflections from above the surface. Using the standard formula for this angle, it turns out the angle is about 48.2 degrees. If Jesus is viewed as standing up in the boat (eyes 6 ft above water level), then by normal vision he could only see into the water at distances less than 7 ft from the boat. The liberal explanation that he saw the fish is thus unlikely!

3. Stilling a Storm (8,4,8,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Mark seems to be most definite on time, the day of parables, early in Galilean ministry

Apparently takes boat across Sea to avoid crowds

Serious storm arises while Jesus asleep

Disciples terrified, awake him for help?

Liberal explanations

Allegorizing: presence of X calms disciples

Camb NEB: some actual event behind it, poss exaggerated, connects with demonic

Evidence of historicity

Divergence of details?

Restraint of narrative

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Amazed, fearful, reconsider their ideas of Jesus

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

Calming storm - Jonah

Controlling elements - Elijah after Mt Carmel

Other parallels

God's deliverance in storm - Ps 107:23-32

c. Significance

Immediate

Deliverance from death

Lesson in faith - why so fearful? Jesus is calm

Gives broader scope for understanding who Jesus is

Place in salvation history

Seems to go beyond Ps 8 - what entrusted to man to show Jesus having God's powers (tho Job 1:19 must be kept in mind)

Symbolic elements

Much allegorizing; cp w/ ark, and w/ picturing church as a ship

4. Feeding the 5000 (14,6,9,6)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Latter part of Gal. ministry

12 just returned from their mission (Lk)

Jesus has just heard of John Bs execution (Mt)

Jesus takes disciples off by selves to rest (Mk)

Crowds follow; Jesus teaches all day, feeds at eve

Liberal explanations

Lesson in sharing: many have food hidden away

Invented story to cp w/ Elijah & Elisha

Evidence of historicity

Fourfold record w/ considerable variety

Details of place (territory of Bethsaida Julias)

Reference to *kophinoi* (std food baskets of Jews)

Jesus has leftovers gathered up

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Only reported by John: "the prophet" (Dt 18:15)

Were about to force him to become king

b. OT Background

Similar miracles: besides Cana and 4000

Manna (Ex 16, Num 11, Dt 8, Josh 5, Neh 9, Ps 78) & quail (Ex 16, Num 11, Ps 78, 105) in wilderness

Elijah & widow of Zarephath (1 K 17)

Oil multiplied (2 K 4)

Loaves & grain multiplied (2 K 4)

Other parallels

God feeds (Ps 104:27ff; Ps 132:15)

Rabbinic views on Leviathan & Behemoth

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Crowd of 5000+ ate, had all they wanted, more left over than originally existed

Want to make Jesus king

Place in salvation history

Comparable to Moses w/ Israel in wilderness (so Dt 18:15, prophet like Moses)

But Jesus' connection w/ miracle much more direct than Moses'

Symbolic elements

Jesus' discourse next day (Jn 6:22-71) connects this w/ giving own life to sustain man, so significance something like Lord's supper

5. Walking on Water (14,6,0,6)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Disciples sent off by boat (to avoid their particip in making Jesus king?)

Jesus flees into hills to pray, spending most of night there

Disciples get caught by storm in middle of lake, Jesus comes to them in 4th watch (3-6 AM)

Liberal explanations

Jesus walking on shore or sandbar

Evidence of historicity

Time notations (Mt, Mk), distance notation (Jn),

Connection w/ feeding 5000 (esp in Jn)

Peter's response fits personality

Misidentification by disciples, lack of understanding

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Amazed, worshiped Him

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

Unusual flotation: axe head (2 K 6)

Crossing water: Red Sea (Ex 14), Jordan (Josh 3, 2 K 2)

Sudden transport (Ezk 3:14; 8:3; 37:1)

Other parallels

"He alone... treads waves of sea" (Job 9:8)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Disciples delivered from danger, rejoined to Jesus

Peter learns lesson in faith, pride

All have better picture who Jesus is

Even those not present puzzled (Jn 6:25)

Place in salvation history

Another action beyond OT prophets => Jesus is God

Symbolic elements

God the one who delivers from trouble

Sea as opponent?

6. Coin in Fish's Mouth (17,0,0,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Late in Galilean ministry

Just returned to Capernaum, keeping low profile (Mk 9:30)

Peter questioned by those collecting 1/2 shekel tax, does Jesus pay? Peter answers "yes"

Jesus responds w/ question & miracle

Evidence of historicity

Details of tax: called double-drachma rather than 1/2 shekel; term used not LXXs but fits contemporary usage (diff size drachma)

Stater as term for tetradrachm

Jesus' peculiar answer (important for significance)

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Occurrence not even reported, much less reactions

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

Movement of animals: Jonah, quails, plagues

Financial provision: oil for widow

Pre-knowledge:

OT prophecy, e.g., Samuel re/ Saul (1 S 10)

Other background

Half-shekel tax (Ex 30:12-16; 2 K 12:4; 2 Ch 24:6-9)

Neh 10:32 (something else?)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Temple tax paid

Jesus makes point w/ Peter re/ its obligatory nature; seals this point w/ miraculous catch

Place in salvation history

- The One who controls fish has come
- His relation to Father different than others (re/ atonement)
- He brings others into a similar relation

Symbolic elements

- Half-shekel tax and atonement
- Relation of Xn to law

B. Miracles over the Human Realm

1. Healing Nobleman's Son (0,0,0,4)

a. Historicity

Occasion

- After return from Judea & Samaria into Galilee
- n response to pleading of father

Liberal explanation

- Jesus telepathically gave boy will to live

Evidence of historicity

- Royal official or relative of royal family was he Chuza (Lk 8:3)?
- Verb "come down" (47) and time indications (43, 52)
- Development of father's faith: come down (47), accepts Jesus' word (50), began to get better (52), believed (53)

Reaction of eyewitnesses

- Only father saw both sides, but independently checked time
- Servants & household knew of sudden end of fever
- Father & household believed

b. OT Background

Similar miracles:

- Healings: not a lot; serpents (Num 21); leprosy of Miriam (Num 12) & Naaman (2 K 5); Hezekiah (2 K 20); request re/ Abijah (1 K 14)
- At least one of these (Naaman) at distance

Other parallels:

- LORD heals all your diseases (Ps 103:3)
- Curses of covenant incl fever (Lev 26:16)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

- Relation of signs & wonders to faith (48); note healing is c20 mi away
- Boy healed (52), father brought to faith (47-48,50,53); also household (53)

Place in salvation history

- First healing? (54); but note Jn 2:23
- Prob means 2nd Galilean sign (1st healing there)

Symbolic elements

- Nothing obvious
- Contrast Abraham (ready to give son) and God (gave His son)

2. Woman with Hemorrhage (9,5,8,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Follows stilling storm & healing Gadarenes

Some dispute re/ chron. relation to events narrated just before this in Matt

This miracle bound up w/ raising Jairus' daughter

Woman knows of Jesus' power, attempts to get healing secretly

Liberal explanation

Psychosomatic

Evidence of historicity

Appears in 3 Gospels

Details: 12 yr (Mt 9:20), tassel of garment (20), trembling (fearing rabbi's reaction to her uncleanness?)

Peculiar feature suggesting Jesus did not know who touched him (Mk, Lk)

Reaction of eyewitnesses

(Mk, Lk) she feels healing take place; fear & trembling, but willing to confess when confronted

b. OT Background

Similar miracles: nothing very close

Healing at touch: Elijah's bones (2 K 13)

Women healed of infertility: Sarah (Gen 21), Rebekah (Gen 25:21),

Abimelek's women (Gen 20:17-18), etc.

Other parallels:

Uncleanness of woman w/ hemorrhage (Lev 15:25-30)

To be isolated (Num 5:2-3); those who touch them unclean (Lev 5:2-3)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Woman healed when physicians could not heal

Jesus can heal w/o intention (cp Peter, Paul)

Encourages faith of Jairus?

Place in salvation history

Jesus' compassion for women

Undoing effects of fall

Symbolic elements

Sin of Israel like uncleanness of woman, but God will cleanse her (Ezk 36:16-38)

3. Raising Jairus' Daughter (9.5.8.0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

See previous miracle

Daughter of Jairus, ruler of synagogue, is dying (Matt compresses the account)

Liberal explanation

Girl just asleep

Evidence of historicity

Name of official; age of daughter; Aramaic words

Mockery of mourners (but not developed further)

Give her something to eat

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Amazement of small group in room

Story spreads far and wide

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

Resurrection of widow's son (1 K 17) by Elijah, of Shunemite's son (2 K 4) by Elisha, man by Elisha's bones (2 K 13), all rather recently dead

Other parallels

Uncleanness conveyed by touching dead (Num 19:11-12)

Eschatological materials on resurrection (e.g., Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Dead child raised, returned to parents

Action in presence of parents, Peter, Jas, John

Evidence for many who knew she was dead

Place in salvation history

First such resurrection since time of Elijah, Elisha?

Symbolic elements

Most natural is picture of coming resurrection

Connection with Ezk 37 prob too far-fetched

4. Healing Paralytic (9,2,5,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Not clear from divergence of Mt & Mk when this occurred, but app just before Matt's conversion

Evidence of historicity

Occurs in 3 Gospels in such a form as to suggest not copied from one another

Details of time are vague, but took place in Capernaum; number of men given (tho natural)

Opening roof unusual

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Pharisees grumble at claim to forgive sin, but app silent when miracle worked

Paralytic goes away glorifying God

Others astonished, fearful, glorify God, remark on uniqueness, strangeness

of event

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

Jeroboam's hand shriveled & restored (1 K 13)

Lame leap like deer at time of Israel's redemption (Isa 35:6)

Other parallels

Lameness, etc., disqualify for priesthood (Lev 21:18)

Forgiveness given only by God and by person sinned against

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Fellow healed

Attestation of Jesus' claim to forgive sins

Place in salvation history

The One who forgives sin has become man

Symbolic elements

Cp Isa 35:6, pointing to eschaton

5. Cleansing Leper (8,1,5,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Matt seems to be most definite, putting it after Sermon on Mt (8:1)

Mk & Lk are vague, but still early in Galilean ministry

Fellow seeks Jesus out

Liberal explanation

Some uncertainty re/ exact nature of disease (Heb & Gk terms broader than Hansen's disease, which itself has several types)

Liberals tend to opt for milder forms & psych cure

Evidence of historicity

Matt seems to locate near site of Sermon on Mt;

Mk & Lk out from Capernaum on a Gal. tour

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Not specified

Leper so overwhelmed he doesn't obey Jesus' instructions

b. OT Background

Similar miracles: healings from leprosy

Moses' hand (Ex 14); Miriam (Num 12); Naaman (2 K 5)

Other parallels

Diagnosis of leprosy (Lev 13)

Cleansing ceremony (Lev 14; cp touching dead)

1st day: initial exam & ceremony (1-8), no longer isolated, but outside own home

7th day: shaving all hair, washing self, clothes (9), now clean

8th day: offerings; some resemblance to consecration of priest (10-20); if poor (21-32)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Man cleansed, faith rewarded

Jesus' compassion, concern for law ceremony as testimony?

Jesus concerned to avoid wrong kind of publicity?

Place in salvation history

Like Moses & Elisha, one who heal lepers again walks the earth

In contrast, Jesus touches leper, who is cleansed rather than rendering

Jesus unclean (parallel w/ resurrections by Elijah, Elisha)

Symbolic elements

Could not find clear evidence of symbolic value of leprosy; Ps 51:5-7 not obviously referring to leprosy

6. Centurion's Servant (8,0,7,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Both Gospels indicate this occurs in Capernaum after Sermon on Mt

Centurion (obv Gentile, poss God-fearer) hears of Jesus' return, sends

Jewish elders w/ request

Note difference of Mt & Lk narration; prob a case of simplification by Mt

Liberal explanation

Never happened? coincidence?

Evidence of historicity

Name of location, agreement of both Gospels on time of event

Mediation thru elders

Rabbinic & OT terminology for kingdom

Jesus' amazement

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Nothing recorded except Centurion's humility (in advance) and Jesus' amazement at his faith

b. OT Background

Similar miracles:

Action at distance: Naaman's leprosy healed (1 K 5); Amalek defeated (Ex 17)

Miracle for Gentile: Naaman 1 K 5), Woman of Zarephath (1 K 17)

Other parallels

Provision for Gentile prayer (1 K 8:41-43) & conversion (Isa 11:10; 42:1,6; 49:6; 60:3)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Servant healed

Faith of Centurion forms basis for Jesus' prophecy re/ Gentiles in kingdom

Place in salvation history

New element is promise to Gentiles, contrast w/ Israel in Matthew

Note how Matt emphasizes equality of Gentiles, Luke emphasizes goodness of Jews!

Symbolic elements

Don't see any beyond that indicated above
(Centurion sort of "first fruits")

7. Raising Widow's Son (0,0,7,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

The next day (or shortly after) healing Centurion's servant
Jesus' app continuing his Galilee tour
Nain on Mt Moreh near Jezreel Valley, over 20 mi SW of Capernaum
Jesus and crowd of followers meet funeral procession coming out of city

Liberal explanation

Resuscitation from coma

Evidence of historicity

Nain not mentioned elsewhere in antiquity except in Xn sources
(Eusebius, Jerome), but village still there today in right place
(called Neim)

Details fit Jewish burial: procession, outside city, family in front, open bier or coffin

Judea - Luke app using term in broad sense (land of Jews = Palestine) rather than in Roman provincial sense (1:5; 4:44; 23:5)

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Become fearful, glorify God
Say "great prophet arisen"; "God has visited"

b. OT Background

Similar miracles: resurrections

Widow's son by Elijah (1 K 17)
Shunemite's son by Elisha (2 K 4)
Man by Elisha's bones (2 K 13)

Other materials:

Resurrection of last day (Dan 12:1-2, etc.)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

All consequences of son's death reversed (incl emotional and financial for mother)

More public demonstration of Jesus' power than in raising Jairus' daughter
Report spread far and wide

Place in salvation history

About same as raising Jairus' daughter, but evidentially far stronger
Less likelihood of mistaken diagnosis, as now preparing to bury (some hours after death)

Adds second case w/o reasonable grounds for collusion or mistake

Makes coma theories less likely
Symbolic elements
Only as sample of eschatological resurrection

8. Healing at Pool of Bethesda (0,0,0,5)

a. Historicity

Occasion

During a feast of the Jews (several suggested, even Purim); a few months to a year after events of John 4

Jesus sees a fellow who is lame (or something of sort), heals him on Sabbath

Liberal explanation

Psychosomatic, didn't happen

Evidence of historicity

Location now well-established, though site unknown even in 1900

Reaction of Jewish leaders fits rabbinic view of Sabbath

Poorly attested verse 4 re/ angel suggests place well-known in tradition from before AD 70

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Fellow himself seems grateful (11, 15; latter should not be understood as malicious)

Jewish leaders see only a violation of Sabbath, later compounded (17) by blasphemy

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

No references to healing on Sabbath in OT

Both Elijah and Elisha touched dead to raise them

Other materials

Sabbath regulations (Ex 23:12; 31:14-15; 35:2-3; Num 15:32-36; Neh 13:15-22; Jer 17:21-27)

No manna on Sabbath (Ex 16:22-29)

But priests labor on Sabbath (Num 28:9-10)

Lame to walk when redemption comes (Isa 35:6)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Man healed

Controversy develops betw Jesus & leaders, resulting in strong opposition to Him for His actions & claims

Place in salvation history

Jesus makes claims before official representatives of the nation

His authority over Sabbath due to His unique relation to Father

Symbolic elements

Sabbath as eschaton?

Healing as eschatological?

9. Man Born Blind (0,0,0,9)

a. Historicity

Occasion

At Jerusalem, whether Feast of Tabernacles (chs 7-8) or Feast of Dedication (Hannukah, ch 10)

Jesus & disciples see man born blind (presumably begging, v 8); disciples ask question about cause of ailment; Jesus heals him

Liberal explanation

invented? psychosomatic?

Evidence of historicity

Terms rabbi, Pharisees, Siloam

Sabbath controversy involving spittle and clay making

Details of investigation, excommunication

Hebraism "Give God the glory" (Josh 7:19)

Perceptive picture of human psychology re/ blind man, parents, neighbors, Pharisees

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Growing faith of blind man

Growing disbelief of Pharisees (but still divided)

Dispute among neighbors over his identity

b. OT Background

Similar miracles:

No cases of healing blind narrated in OT

God makes blind and heals (Ex 4:11; Ps 146:8)

Blind healed in eschaton (Isa 29:18; 35:5)

Healed by God's servant (Isa 42:7)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Fellow healed, but also faced persecution; app came to salvation

Pharisees forced to deal w/ matter; refuse to accept Christ's claims, so driven further away

Place in salvation history

Again shows uniqueness of Christ in re/ to Moses, Elijah, Elisha (v 32)

Also strong theme of judgment & deliverance

Symbolic elements

Physical light & vision, darkness & blindness stand for spiritual (vv 5, 39-41; cp Isa 42:16-19; 59:10)

Jesus makes clay => God making clay to form man (Gen 2:7)

10. Man with Withered Hand (12,3,6,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

App early in Gal. ministry; all 3 Synoptics give it in same group of

Sabbath disputes, but uncertain whether before or after Sermon on Mt

Jesus in synagogue on Sabbath where there is man w/ withered (paralyzed?) hand; scribes & Pharisees watching Jesus to see if he will heal

Liberal explanation

Never happened

Evidence of historicity

Reported in 3 Gospels (Lk and Mk very close), w/ each giving some details not in others:

Mt: Q by opponents; animal argument

Mk: Herodians; Jesus' reaction to their silence

Lk: right hand; madness of opponents

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Only anger of Pharisees & their beginning to plot Jesus' destruction noted

b. OT Background

Similar miracles:

Prophet heals Jeroboam's withered hand (1 K 13:4-6; but note that prophet prays)

Similar healing at day of redemption (Isa 35:6; Jer 31:8?)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Fellow healed, but not obv that Jesus did any work, since He did not touch, pray or proclaim healing

Forms basis for Sabbath controversy:

to do good, heal = Jesus' work on Sabbath

to do evil, kill = Phar's work on Sabbath

shows real redemptive significance of Sabbath

Place in salvation history

No addition to healing lame man or to obvious healings

Contrast w/ prophetic activity in closest OT miracle; says something about who Jesus is

Symbolic elements

Eschatological, perfecting of body

Doing healings on Sabbath may point up its eschatological significance

11. The Ten Lepers (0,0,17,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

App last year of ministry; not very definite chron in this part of Luke;

Lenski, Farrar connect w/ Lk 9:56; headed for Jerusalem

Traveling betw Galilee & Samaria, prob Jezreel-Harod Valley

Ten lepers see Jesus, call out for mercy; he sends them to priests to be declared clean (Jerusalem? local dwelling of priests?)

Liberal explanation

Parable

Evidence of historicity

Location fairly definite, though chronology not

Incident fits regulations re/ lepers, as also human psychology (forgetting benefactor)

Jesus does not blast the one for not following instructions, nor cancel the cure of the nine as often in fairy tales

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Nothing about bystanders

All ten lepers had faith to obey

One leper overcome by gratitude, returns to praise God and thank Jesus

Jesus shows concern that others do not return

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

Cleansing from leprosy: Moses, Miriam not similar; Naaman (2 K 5) is closest, a foreigner who returned to thank healer

Miracles for non-Jews: Naaman again; widow of Zarephath (1 K 17)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Lesson in faith for ten cleansed

Lesson in gratitude for disciples (note: not clear that all 9 were Jews)

Place in salvation history

Miracle itself no particular advance over others

Intimation of Jesus as light to Gentiles (Isa 49:6)

Symbolic elements

Significance of leprosy? Miriam, Uzziah for rebellion?

12. Deaf and Dumb Fellow (0,7,0,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Right after healing of Syrophenician's daughter, Jesus goes to Decapolis & Sea of Galilee by round-about route N thru Sidon and then E, perhaps to avoid crowds and Herod; parallel to Matt 15

People of region (app E shore of Sea of Galilee) bring him deaf & dumb fellow

Liberal explanation

Psychosomatic using magic or primitive means as accommodation

Evidence of historicity

Some geographical indications (tho these attacked for unusual route taken)

Striking detail in healing itself, incl symbolic actions and words of Jesus in Aramaic (which liberals seek to read as magical technique)

Reaction of eyewitnesses

App healed fellow does not keep quiet

Crowds around are amazed

b. OT Background

Similar miracles

None in narrative sections, tho app Ezekiel was made dumb and then cured as part of his prophetic ministry (Ezk 24:27; 33:22)

Eschatological healing:

Deaf (Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:18)

Dumb (Isa 35:6; LXX uses same rare word as Mark)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Fellow healed (prob actions of Jesus intended as sign language to communicate what he was doing)

Strong impact on people who (Mt 15:31) seem to be Gentiles

Place in salvation history

Pretty definite ref to Isa 35:5-6, of which it is at least a partial fulfillment

Symbolic elements

OT occasionally uses deafness & dumbness in spiritual sense (Ps 58:4; Isa 43:8; 56:10)

13. Raising Lazarus (0,0,0,11)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Just a few months before crucifixion, at end of Jesus' Perea ministry
Jesus at Bethany beyond Jordan when message reaches Him; waits two days before going to Bethany near Jerusalem

Liberal explanations

Lazarus not really dead: resuscitation or plot

Parable of L & RM made into a narrative

Myth or allegory

Evidence of historicity

Character of Mary and Martha matches that in Luke

Location of Bethany near Jerusalem, other place names

Details of narrative, incl reaction of enemies, ref to blind man (37)

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Many Jews who saw event come to believe

Some report incident to Pharisees

b. OT Background

Nothing new that was not covered in other resurrection accounts, except explicit connection of this resurrection with eschaton (23-26)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Lazarus raised, family restored

Sets in motion decision of Sanhedrin to kill Jesus

Place in salvation history

Only addition to other res. accounts is statement of Jesus as Resurrection and Life

Symbolic elements

Here eschatological significance brought out in 23-26

C. Miracles over the Spirit Realm

1. Gadarene Demoniacs (8,5,8,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

Closely related to miracle of calming storm, which this immediately follows in all 3 Synoptics

Still early in Galilean ministry

Jesus met by demoniacs and He & disciples disembark

Liberal explanations (Plummer's list)

Whole story myth

Healing historical, pigs not

Demoniacs frightened pigs

Drowning of pigs an accident about same time

Demoniacs merely insane; Jesus humors them re/ pigs, but story taken as historical

Evidence of historicity

Details of location: other side, tombs, steep slope, variant names (Gedara, Gerasa, Gergesa)

Reaction of people in sending Jesus away

Reaction of eyewitnesses

Pigs stampede into lake

Pigherders flee, perhaps to get to town w/ their side of story first

Demoniac now normal

Others come to see what has happened

Eyewitnesses (disciples, others?) explain

b. OT Background

Similar miracles:

Not much; more in pagan, rabbinic & intertestament literature; Os Guinness' "campfire" effect?

Control of animals by God: Laban's sheep, plagues, quail, Balaam's donkey, cows pulling ark, ravens, bears? lions in den

Control of animals by Satan: snake in Garden, Sabeans, Chaldeans in Job
Demonic influence

Saul (1 S 16), false prophets (1 K 22:22)

Little on Satan in OT: 1 Ch 21:1; Job 1-2; Ps 109:6; Zec 3:1-2; poss Gen 6:1-2; closest here is Zec 3, where God delivers Joshua from Satan (but not possession)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

Two men freed from Satan's power (main one goes out to proclaim God's work)

Gadarenes out 2,000 pigs! They ask Jesus to leave

Prob a deliverance/judgment theme here

Place in salvation history

App growing activity of demonic in IT period as far as Jews concerned, anyway perhaps due to mixing w/ Gentiles, poss due to approaching conflict w/ coming Christ

Direct confrontation w/ powers of Satan:

Won decisively by Jesus

Does Jesus use pigs to rid area of demons?

or do they to rid area of Jesus?

Jesus' power extends to spiritual realm, not merely nature and disease

Symbolic elements

Foreshadowing defeat of Satan, coming judgment

Note remark of demons in Mt 8:29

2. Syrophenician's Daughter (15,7,0,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

During latter part of Jesus' ministry, His special time working w/ disciples
Mt and Mk both put this incident in midst of 2 others: Pharisaic opposition to disciples not washing; feeding of 4,000

Jesus has withdrawn to NW, presumably to avoid crowds and enemies
(Mk 7:24)

Pagan woman recognizes Him, seeks release of demon-possessed daughter

Liberal explanations

Psychosomatic

Evidence of historicity

Consistently joined to other incidents

Ref to woman is Canaanite (Mt), Greek, Syro-Phoenician (Mk)

Place: region of Tyre and Sidon

Cryptic remarks of Jesus characteristic

b. OT Background

Similar miracles:

Done for Gentiles: Naaman, Zarephath widow, also Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar

Other materials:

Separation between Jew and Gentile

Oriental view of dogs (somewhat modified by use of diminutive, prob to indicate pet dogs)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

- Remote exorcism of demon w/o even a verbal command
- Child delivered
- Faith of woman in face of obstacles
- Grace to Gentiles

Place in salvation history

- Hint of Gospel to Gentiles, but relation to Jews specified
- Most striking recorded exorcism as noted above

Symbolic elements

- Woman's parable re/ dogs
- Prediction of Gospel to Gentiles by synecdoche?

3. Possessed Boy (17,9,9,0)

a. Historicity

Occasion

- Linked w/ transfiguration in all 3 Gospels
- Disciples left behind could not heal boy
- Scribes apparently hassling them

Liberal explanations

- Boy merely epileptic

Evidence of historicity

- Three accounts, all w/ some different details
- Father's faith is a striking detail (Mk 9:24)

Reaction of eyewitnesses

- Only Luke records their astonishment

b. OT Background

Similar miracles:

- As noted above, little in OT on demonic possession
- Saul's troubles closest (1 S 16)
- Spirit interference w/ human action also seen in Sp of God stopping Saul (1 S 19)

c. Significance

Immediate effect

- Demon gets in last shot (Mk 9:26)
- Boy healed, poss resurrected
- All amazed
- Disciples puzzled about their inability

Place in salvation history

- Even demonic forces subject to Him
- Tougher for disciples?
- Faithless generation, prayer, fasting?

Symbolic elements

- An eschatological reference?

D. Their Significance

1. OT Background
2. Jesus' Claims
3. Connection with Creation
4. Connection with Redemption/Eschatology

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