

The Miracles of Jesus

*A study of
the miracles of Jesus
as testified of
in the Gospel of John*

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3. Read Lord's Day 5 and 6 from the Heidelberg Catechism. Since the only way back to God is by paying our debt, why is Jesus the only Saviour there could ever be? (Think about the description of the Mediator and Deliverer.) How is this a great comfort for us? How should we respond to the revelation of Jesus Christ, that is, how should we respond knowing who Jesus Christ is?

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the dead. Even Thomas, doubting Thomas as we sometimes call him, was convinced. After touching our Lord, Thomas said, "My Lord and My God." Thomas did not doubt anymore. And neither should we. Faith is not about thinking something is true but not really knowing if it is true. Faith, says our Catechism is a knowledge and conviction that everything God says in His Word is true. While some Christians today think the Bible is full of fairy-tales and man-made stories, we know that the whole of God's Word is true. Even as God is true.

The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle John, chose these seven miracles we have studied to teach us about the truth of God's promised. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, He is the Son of God, there is forgiveness of sins in Him, there is reconciliation (a reuniting) between God and man, we are again in the fellowship of God in Christ. Not because we make Jesus to be our Saviour, not because someone thought up a story about a good man and told everyone to believe in Him, not because we found Jesus in the history of the world and said, "He should be our Saviour." Jesus is our Saviour because He is the Christ, that is, He is the Messiah, and He is the Son of God.

The Heidelberg Catechism tells us why this is so important in Lord's Day 5. There we are asked how we can escape God's punishment against sin and return to His favour. The answer is, only if God's is paid in full. Then we are asked if we can pay God for our sins, or if any other creature can pay for us. The answer is no. So then the Catechism asks, "What kind of Mediator and Deliverer should we look for then?" The answer is this, "He must be truly human and truly righteous, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, He must also be true God." The miracles recorded by John tell us that Jesus was more powerful than any other creature. They teach us that He is truly God. And therefore we can know that through Him our debt to God is paid and we are redeemed (which means bought back) by God. Not because we think we are, but because we know we are.

Lesson 1

Read John 20: 24-31

Miracles are amazing things. When we think about miracles we do not think about average, ordinary things. Walking around is not a miracle. Eating supper is not a miracle. Those are things we do every day. Those are ordinary things. Miracles are extraordinary. They are amazing things, like healing the sick and making the lame walk. That is why miracles are so popular, even today. People still like to see or read about miracles because they like the unknown, the spectacular and the unexpected.

When Jesus walked upon the earth many of the people that followed Him only wanted to see miracles. In Luke 23:8 we read how even Herod wanted to see Jesus perform a miracle. The people then, just like people today, wanted to see amazing things. They wanted to see something spectacular like a fireworks display so that they could say "oohh" and "aahh." People then, just like people today, wanted to see powerful and amazing acts. But was that all the miracles of Jesus were? Did Jesus do miracles just to impress people, to make them say "oohh" and "aahh"?

Fortunately for us we don't need to guess. In the verses we read for this reason the Apostle John wrote, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*" The reason Jesus performed these miracles, John tells us, is so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ. Why do you think this is important?

Think about how many different ways there are to heaven. Of course there is really only one way, but the world teaches that there are many different ways, many different gods that can be worshipped and followed and all of them lead to the same place. But is this in fact the case?

Lesson 10

Read John 20: 24-31

When we began our study of these miracles performed by Jesus we looked first at why these miracles have been recorded in the Scriptures. The Apostle John tells us that these miracles were recorded that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in His name. It is this very important matter of believing in Jesus Christ that we now come to again. Only this time we ask the question: "How can we be sure?"

We live in a day where science is considered to be the surest kind of knowledge there is. Science, we are told, can prove what it says with evidence. Someone might say, "I don't believe in bacteria." We would never expect someone to say this, but if they did, we could take a microscope and show them the bacteria. And when we did we might say, "there's the proof." Or think of someone who doesn't believe the earth is round. If we could we might take them up in the Space Shuttle and show them from way up high that the earth is in fact round. In this way science claims to have proof. And we are so used to this way of thinking that we even say, "Seeing is believing" or "I'll believe it when I see it."

When it comes to religion, however, we assume, or to put it another way, we just accept the fact that there is no proof. Can we prove the existence of God? Can we prove the presence of angels? Can we prove that there is a heaven? The answer is no. There is no microscope or telescope or Space Shuttle that we can use to prove what we believe. And so we think that faith means not having proof. "I can't prove it but I believe it", we say. Sometimes you hear someone say, "I believe so" which means they are not quite sure. If they were positive they would say, "I know so." This shows that we sometimes think "believing" and "knowing" are two different things. Take the matter of the resurrection of

Faith is not so much about the subject as much as it is about the object. That means in the sentence, "I believe in Jesus Christ" it is the name "Jesus Christ" that is the most important. Why does believing in Jesus Christ make all the difference in the world? Who is this Jesus Christ? How can He save us? All these questions are answered in the seven miracles recorded by John. And it is those seven miracles that we will study in order to learn more about the One we believe in.

It is this simple point that we have to keep in our minds with each and every miracle we study. The miracles our Lord performed are not meant to simply amaze us like some spectacular fireworks display where we can "ooh" and "aahh." They are the revelation of God that this man, this Jesus of Nazareth is so much more than some figure of history, some significant man who is important to some people. This Son of Mary is the Son of God, He is the Christ and by believing in Him we have eternal life. Let's always remember that.

For Discussion:

1. Sin is the greatest problem we face in life. Do we always remember this? Do we sometimes get distracted and think other problems are even bigger? What are some of those other problems? Is it easy or hard to think about our own sin?
2. Miracles are amazing things. Even more amazing is that the Son of God came as a man to save us. How often should we thank God for the gift of His Son? Do we have to thank God in all our lives or in just some? How do we thank God in all our lives?

world are not wasted. The work that we do daily is not forgotten. That is why at the end of the book of Ecclesiastes we read these words, "here is the conclusion to the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man." Just as the Lord said in Isaiah 55:2 "Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare." We can run around with the world and never be satisfied or we can serve the Christ who has delivered us from death and enjoy the rich blessings of God. May the Lord give us all the grace necessary to live by faith.

For discussion:

1. Think about the world in which we live. List some of the ways the world tries to avoid the topic of death. (Think about how people always try to stay young. Think about how far people will go to keep themselves healthy. Think about what is important to people who live in the moment.)
2. One of the world's slogans is "Carpe Diem" which means, "Seize the day." The idea is that you need to enjoy today because tomorrow may never come. Is this a good way to live for the person who is in Christ? Does this accurately reflect the reality of Christ's work? Why or why not?

Lesson 2

Read John 2: 1-11

In our study of the miracles of Jesus we turn now to look at the first miracle Jesus performed. Before we consider what Jesus did in this event we should keep a few things in mind. Remember the reason the Apostle John wrote this book. Last time we saw that the reason John wrote this book was so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing in Him you may receive eternal life. We need to keep this in mind as we study because John always kept it in mind.

When John wrote this book there were so many things he could have written about. John himself says that if all the things Jesus ever did were recorded even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. That means that John did not write down every miracle Jesus did, he only wrote some of them down. In fact of all the many miracles Jesus performed John only tells us about seven. That is important to remember as we study all seven miracles. It is important because it means each miracle was carefully picked and each one fits perfectly into the overall message of this book. Our job is to figure out how each miracle fits.

Take the very first miracle Jesus performed. Of all the miracles John could have picked why did the Spirit move John to pick this one? The Bible tells us that this was the very first miracle Jesus ever performed. Yet the other three gospel writers do not include it in their accounts. Which should make us ask, "What is it about the wedding at Cana that is so important, so special that it is the first miracle the Apostle John records?" To answer this question let's look carefully at what the inspired Apostle tells us.

In the first place we need to think about is where this miracle happened. That is easy of course, the miracle happened at a wedding in Cana. But where is Cana? If we looked on a map

The disciples needed to know, even as all believers need to know, that death is not the end, and that in Christ there is no death. Imagine that. Imagine knowing that you will never die. So many people try so hard to cheat death yet the only One who can save us from death is Christ, because He alone is the Savior, the Messiah, the Christ. Jesus came to do away with our punishment, to free us from the curse of sin, to liberate us from the constant threat of death. And in Christ we are truly freed.

Sometimes we forget this. Sometimes we forget that we are freed from worry and from fear in Jesus Christ. This would not have been forgotten by the people living during the black plague. The black plague, as maybe you've learned in school, was a terrible illness that killed much of the population of the world. And because so many people were dying, and because death was so close at hand, people often reacted in one of two ways. The first way was to live it up, to party and drink, and do anything their sinful hearts desired. Why not, after all they might die tomorrow, so you had better enjoy today. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" was the motto. The other way people reacted was by fleeing from any other human contact. People ran away from the cities, ran into the hills and lived by themselves like hermits. If being around other people brought the plague upon you, it was best to leave other people behind. But what a sad way to live. All by yourself, with no one to talk to or to enjoy time with, and constantly worried that you might get sick. Fear would consume your life. Now imagine that you had a special medicine that would prevent someone from ever getting the plague and imagine you took that medicine. How would you now react? Would you eat, drink and be merry because tomorrow we die? No, probably not, after all you won't die tomorrow. Would you run away from everybody and live by yourself? No, probably not, after all you don't need to be afraid of anyone. What you could do was stay and work. Help the people who were sick, help clean things up. If you knew you were never going to die you would be free to help others. In Jesus Christ we have this freedom.

There were a number of situations in which God's people were required to wash themselves in order to be declared ceremonial clean. Just like our baptism represents the need for being cleansed from the stain of sin so too in the Old Testament the people were continually being reminded that they were dirty and needed to be washed clean. Do you think that by washing themselves with water they were able to actually clean themselves? Do you think they only needed to take a bath to have their sins washed away? Of course not. No matter how much we wash our outsides with water we can do nothing to clean the dirt on the inside, that is, the sin in our hearts. To be washed clean of sin we would need something far more powerful than water. To be washed clean of sin we would need the blood of a Sacrifice, not an animal sacrifice but of a person who would die on our behalf. To be washed clean of sin we need the Christ. By performing this miracle as He did Jesus revealed Himself to be the Christ.

The water jugs our Lord used in this miracle were jugs filled with water for purification. As a good host the bridegroom of this wedding had made sure there was a lot of water available for those who needed to be cleansed. *The Bridegroom*, however, had come to give something far better than outward cleansing with water; He had come to give inward purity, purity of the heart. By His work His people would be totally cleansed of all their sins. By turning the water into wine Jesus was saying, "You no longer need the water because now you have the blood." It was for this reason that rejoicing and joy could now truly take place.

Jesus did not simply take the water away from the people; He turned it into wine. In the Old Testament wine was more than a nice drink. Wine represented the wonderful blessings of God toward His people. Proverbs 3: 10 tells us that one of the promises of salvation is that our barrels will overflow with new wine. In Joel 2:24, which is a text that describes what would happen when the Messiah would come, we read, "The vats will overflow with new wine and oil." The meaning of these texts is not that God's people will always have lots of wine to drink. The meaning of these texts is deeper than that.

The story of this miracle begins in a rather simple way. We are told that a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped His feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." In these few short verses we are given all the information we need. Lazarus is very sick (or else the sisters would not have sent for Jesus) and Lazarus, Mary, and Martha are very close to our Lord; they love Him and He loves them. It seems to be a rather simple situation.

And you would imagine that because Lazarus was so sick, and because he and his sisters were so close to Jesus, that as soon as Jesus heard about it He would go to His friends. That is what we do, isn't it? If a close friend were really sick we would go to see them. And yet Jesus did not go. Listen to verses 5, 6. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when He heard Lazarus was sick, He stayed where He was two more days." This certainly seems strange. Why did Jesus not go immediately to His friend's bedside? Jesus had cured so many people before why wouldn't He cure Lazarus? Why did He wait two days?

And then after two days our Lord leaves for Bethany, where Mary and Martha lived. Instead of leaving immediately our Lord waits. Why? Especially since the waiting meant Lazarus was going to die? We don't know how far away Jesus was from the town of Bethany; He may have been one day's journey or two days journey. But by the time Jesus arrives in Bethany we know that Lazarus has been dead for four days. What this means is that by waiting for two days it was impossible for Jesus to arrive in Bethany in time to heal Lazarus. Had He left immediately our Lord may have made it in time. But the wait was too much. Lazarus had died.

For the disciples the whole matter of returning to Bethany was a difficult one anyway. No doubt they too loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They were probably just as sad to hear that Lazarus was so sick. But they were also terrified of the Jewish

2. The wedding at Cana was a very special wedding. Was it a boring affair? What did weddings mean to the Jews? Why does this make the wedding at Cana such a fitting place for Jesus' first miracle?

3. Jesus turned water into wine. What was the water used for? What does wine represent? How does Jesus' work make our lives rich?

Lesson 9

Read John 11:1-37

Now we come to last miracle recorded by the Apostle. In our study of the miracles recorded by John we have seen Jesus turn water into wine; we have seen Him heal a nobleman's son and a man who was paralyzed; we have seen Jesus feed the five thousand with only five barley loaves and two small fish; we have seen Jesus walk on the water and we have seen Jesus heal a man born blind. All of these miracles are incredible. Each one of them reveals to us the power and the purpose of our Lord and Savior. And each one shows us the love our God has for His people. And yet, even for all their amazing power there is still something missing.

While no one likes to talk about it, death is a constant reality for every one of us. Since the fall of man into sin the ugly and terrible shadow of death has hung over humanity. It is there at all times. It is because of death that the writer of Ecclesiastes says, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." It is because of death that the Lord declares in Isaiah 40, "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it." And we could go on. Throughout the Scriptures we read of the reality of death. Reading through the wisdom literature alone tells us this (wisdom literature is the name for the book of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes). While none of us likes to talk about it death is a constant reality for every one of us and we need to deal with it.

But how do we deal with it? That's an important question. Everyone tries to, that's for sure. Some people think that if they write the greatest book ever, or paint the best picture ever they will cheat death. It may seem funny but there are countless writers and artists who think that by creating a lasting work they become immortal. Think of Leonardo Da Vinci. Everyone knows who he is because of his work. Artists today want that kind of fame and fortune that lasts longer than their lives. That way something of their lives will last forever and they will have cheated death.

To understand this miracle we have to first think about what Jesus meant when He said, "a prophet has no honour in his own country." This miracle happened in Galilee, which was where Jesus grew up and where people knew Him all His life. When you know someone all their life you think you know them very well. And if that person you have known all your life starts telling you that He is the Saviour of the world, that He is the Son of God, that He is the Christ, it can be hard to believe Him. After all the people of Galilee knew Jesus when He was *just* a little baby, they saw Him grow up, they knew His family, they knew Jesus very well, He was the carpenter's son. Because the people knew Him so well they did not really believe Jesus when He said He was the Son of God, or that He was the Saviour. But the people sure thought Jesus could do amazing things.

When Jesus came to Galilee all sorts of people came to see Him. They all hoped that Jesus would do another miracle; they wanted to see something amazing again. One day, when Jesus was back in Cana, a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum came to Jesus. He too had heard about the miracles that Jesus had performed, how Jesus had healed the sick and the blind. This royal official hoped that Jesus would do the same thing for his sick son. But why did the royal official think that Jesus could heal his son?

Did the royal official think Jesus was a really good doctor? Did he think that Jesus was a really good magician? Did he think that Jesus was the Son of God come to redeem His people from sin? It is impossible for us to say because we don't know what is in someone's heart. But Jesus can. He is the Son of God and He can see what is in our hearts. And Jesus knew that the royal official had only come to see him because he heard Jesus was a miracle worker, not because Jesus was the Messiah.

Listen to what Jesus says after the royal official spoke to Him. Jesus said, "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders you will never believe." You see, the royal official was

that you claim you can see, your guilt remains." What do these words mean? The Pharisees were members of God's people, His chosen Israel. The Lord had given the Israelites great privileges and had established His light in their lives. They could see for they knew the Lord and they knew His blessings and His demands. And because they themselves claimed to be able to see, indeed because as God's chosen Israel they had been shown over and over throughout their history that they were in need of a Saviour who was Jesus Christ, therefore in refusing to accept Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, they were turning away from the light, they were blinding themselves to the light.

There is a saying that "seeing is believing." In this miracle that is not true at all. The Pharisees saw the power of Jesus Christ but refused to believe in Him. The blind man saw and believed. It is not enough to just see we must also believe. This is especially true for the Covenant people. As members of God's people we are shown most clearly our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Even as we have been studying these miracles of Jesus we have been shown who He is and how we must believe in Him. But it is not enough to just say, "I see." We must also say with the man born blind, "Lord, I believe." We may not walk away from the revelation of Jesus Christ, we must cling to Him, lay hold of Him through faith and believe that He is the Son of God.

For Discussion:

1. The Pharisees refused to accept that the man born blind was actually healed. Why was it so important to them that they reject this man's claim? Whose message did they prefer: Jesus' or their own? How is this a warning to us?

We learn that he believed Jesus because John tells us, "The man took Jesus at His Word and departed." This is an important statement. Faith means believing even if you don't see. Faith means trusting in God and in His promises. Faith means believing God's Word. Think about it this way.

When a little baby is baptized the Lord says something amazing to that little baby. The rich promises of God are given to that baby. As that baby grows older he may not remember that day when he was baptized. Obviously he has never seen God or talked to him face to face. But God has spoken to him in his baptism. God's Word was declared. At all our baptisms God says, "I will be your God and you will be my child." But now we must believe, we must take God at His Word. That is what faith means. It means trusting God's Word and God's promises. We cannot save ourselves, but God can. And He promises to. Therefore we must believe.

The royal official was so confident in Jesus that he actually stayed over night in the same town Jesus was in. The next day, on his way home, some servants met their master on his way home and they told him that his son had gotten better. Now remember that these servants and the family of the royal official did not know what had happened. They did not know that the royal official had talked to Jesus and that Jesus had said, "Your son will live." But when they told the royal official that it was at the seventh hour that the son had gotten better and when the royal official told them that it was at that same time that Jesus had said, "Your son will live" they all knew exactly what had happened. They all knew that Jesus had healed the boy and because of what Jesus had done the royal official and his whole household believed. Did they see Jesus? No. Did they see the miracle? No. But they knew because they believed.

Faith is about believing even though we do not see. None of us has ever seen Jesus. But we have heard about what He has done. In church, at home, in school, we learn about what Jesus did thousands of years ago, and what He still does today. We

Lesson 4

Read John 5:1-18

This did not stop the Pharisees though. They asked the blind man what he thought of Jesus. The blind man answered that He was a prophet. This did not sit well with the Pharisees. So instead of accepting that this blind man could now see they tried to deny that he had ever been blind. They called in his parents just to make sure this was not some trick. The parents, afraid of the Pharisees who were using their authority to punish anyone who followed Jesus, admitted that this was their son who was born blind, but they were unwilling to confess that it was because of Jesus that the healing had taken place. The Pharisees were still stuck. It was the man born blind and they still did not have an explanation for why this miracle happened. Even more frustrated now they try to get the man born blind to agree with them by tricking him. The Pharisees said, "Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner." The Pharisees did not know this, of course. They only thought Jesus was a sinner, and they thought it because they did not like Him, not because He had ever done anything wrong. But the man born blind was not going to fall for their trick. He answers, "Whether He is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know, I was blind but now I see." In this answer the blind man points back to the obvious. A miracle had happened, a miracle that defied explanation. The Pharisees were trying to get around the obvious. How do you explain this miracle of sight? To this question the Pharisees had no answer.

So they tried again to find something to disagree with. They ask the man born blind, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" The man born blind now begins to get impatient. "I have told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples, too?" It had become clear to the man born blind that he was being asked these questions for the wrong reasons. The Pharisees wanted to find something to accuse Jesus when they should have been amazed at what had happened to this man born blind. As he said, "Now that is remarkable." And instead of rejoicing with the man born blind over his miraculous healing the Pharisees threw him out.

If you were to ask one hundred people if they know who Jesus is, 90% or more will say they know Him. If you ask the same group who Jesus was they would say a man that lived a couple of thousand years ago. But if you asked the same group if they believed that Jesus is the Son of God in the flesh who came to redeem His people from sin you might have one person out of a hundred that would believe it. You see there are many people who believe Jesus lived a long time ago and even believe that Jesus was a good man and a man to be followed. But there are not nearly as many people who think that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The reason for this is actually quite simple. By nature we all like to think that we can save ourselves. We think that if we do a few good things then God will be impressed with us and will let us into heaven. In fact we are so convinced that we are good enough to go to heaven that when we are told that we cannot do any good we get angry and are offended. Yet that is exactly what the gospel message tells us. The gospel message says, "By grace you have been saved through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." (Eph. 2:8,9) From the very beginning we are told that we cannot save ourselves that we cannot do good and that we cannot earn God's love. And that gospel message is most clearly seen in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

If Jesus is just a good man then we are happy and quite content. You see a good man would be someone just like us, maybe a little better, but not much. Then we can look to Jesus, see what He did, and copy Him. By doing what Jesus did we can live good lives and by living good lives we can earn our way to heaven. But if Jesus is the Son of God then He is more than we are, then He is different than we are, then there must be a reason for why God

Lesson 8

Read John 9:13-41

In the last lesson we looked at the miraculous healing of the man born blind. In this lesson we are going to consider what happened after that miraculous healing. Remember that we are being shown these things so that we can know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing can have life in His name. This is a wonderful blessing for us to have. Not everyone knows that Jesus is the Christ, and only those who confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord will be saved. But with this blessing also comes responsibility. Having received the blessing of God in Jesus Christ we must also cling in faith to our Lord. That is what this lesson is about.

After the man returned from the pool of Siloam he could see again. This was a wonderful and amazing thing. It was so incredible that even the family and friends of this man could hardly believe it. When he came back from the pool, walking without any help, looking around, seeing everything, the people that knew him were so amazed that some of them said, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" and others said, "No, he only looks like him." So incredible was the change in this man that the people could hardly believe it. They asked him what had happened and he told them, but still it was incredible. They asked him who had healed him, but because the man was still blind when he left Jesus to go to the pool of Siloam, the healed blind man did not know who Jesus was, or where He was. So amazed were the people who knew this man that they brought him to the Pharisees.

Jesus and the Pharisees knew each other quite well. The Pharisees were the leaders of the Jews at this time of history, and when Jesus had come to His people preaching the good news the Pharisees did not like it. Jesus' message was not their message. Salvation by grace alone was not what the Pharisees

close yet so far away." For this paralysed man he was so close to healing but because he could not move, and because no one was there who would help him into the pool, it was like the pool was thousands of miles away. So close yet so far away.

Of course, we're not a whole lot different than this man. We might not be paralysed physically but we certainly are paralysed spiritually. That means that we cannot move spiritually. We cannot walk and talk with the Lord; we cannot come to Him for help, we cannot reach out to take anything offered. Spiritually we are unable to move. No matter how close salvation may come to us we can never take hold of it. Just look at the paralysed man.

For 38 years this man was paralyzed. Although he was close to the healing waters of the pool he could never get in. So now the One who heals and who cures people of their diseases, the Son of God Himself comes to this man and asks him, "Do you want to get well?" How do you think this man should answer? Having been paralysed for 38 years what would you answer? Wouldn't you say, "Yes Lord, make me well"? Wouldn't you thank the Lord for this gift of grace? Wouldn't you be excited beyond measure at the thought of being made well? Of course, we all would be. But this was not how the paralysed man in our story reacted.

"Sir," the paralysed man replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." Instead of being overjoyed that the Son of God had come to Him, instead of being thrilled at the possibility of being healed, this paralysed man simply complains. Why? Why would he not be excited and thrilled and overjoyed? The answer is found in that first little word.

The paralysed man did not say, "Lord". He didn't even say, "Jesus". The paralysed man answered Jesus by saying, "Sir." What does this tell us? This tells us that the paralysed man did not know who was talking to him. He thought this was just another tourist or passer-by who stopped for a minute to ask a silly question. Right in front of this man stood the Word of God, the Word who was in the beginning, the Word who was with God.

that time is short and that there is still much to do. God the Father sent His Son to earth to fulfill His task, and there could be no wasting time. And what was the task the Father sent His Son to fulfill? The redemption of His people out of darkness and into His light. It is that goal that Jesus was always focused on and that governed all He did. Jesus would not be delayed from finishing the work He was sent to do.

The last piece of this statement is this, "Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." This goes on to further explain the previous piece. Jesus' time on earth was limited. And while He was on earth in human form His work required immediate and constant attention, Jesus shone brightly in the midst of the darkness, revealing the wonder of the Father's plan of redemption.

All of this taken together means that God's glory in the redeeming of His people by His Son was the great task before Jesus, and He would fulfill that task every moment of His time on earth. And so the blind man was not to be seen as a theological riddle but as a sinner in need of redemption by the One who was sent by the Father.

It is in this light that we can understand why Jesus healed the blind man the way He did. Spitting on the ground and making mud with the saliva Jesus put the mud on the man's eyes. Then Jesus told the blind man to wash in the pool of Siloam, which means "sent" or "One who has been sent." Do you see the significance of the name? Jesus, who was sent by the Father, sent the man to the pool called "One who has been sent." Why did the Father send Jesus? To cleanse His people of their sins and bring them from darkness to light. Why did Jesus send the man to the pool of Siloam? To cleanse the mud from his eyes so that he could see again, going from darkness to light. What our Lord did in this miracle is an example of what He would do for all those in darkness, in fact of what His work was to do while on earth. This miracle is an example of our Lord's saving grace toward darkened sinners.

Jesus is more than a nice man, we know that Jesus is more than a good man. We know who Jesus really is. This is an enormous blessing and gift of God's grace toward us. The simple fact that we know that Jesus is the Son of God is itself an amazing blessing. And it is a blessing with responsibility.

After this man left Jesus and met with the Pharisees he went to the Temple. There Jesus came to him again and said, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." Now Jesus was not saying that if he committed a sin then he might become even more paralysed or some other terrible physical disease might come upon him. Jesus was telling the man of the responsibility he was no under as someone who had received God's grace. No longer was this man allowed to live like he didn't know who Jesus was. No longer was he allowed to live like his life was his own. He had received God's grace; he now had to live like it. And, as the Apostle Paul says, "Therefore, I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship." Having been blessed, this healed man was not allowed to do just anything; he had to give thanks to God for his healing, even as we are called to live thankful lives. Having been blessed we must live as God's children, as His people chosen by Him. If we don't we will not live in eternity with God and His people. So thank the Lord and worship Him.

For discussion:

1. Why don't people like to think Jesus is the Son of God? How do we act if we think we can save ourselves? Do we act humble and selfless? Or do we act proud and selfish?

Lesson 5

Read John 6:1 - 15

Our story begins rather simply. Jesus was walking out of the temple area in Jerusalem with His disciples. Because the temple was a place where there were always people coming and going, and because people came to the temple to worship the Lord, it was a great place for beggars to gather. As the worshippers came along the beggars would cry out for money or food, and hopefully, because the people coming to the temple wanted to serve God, they would give the beggars some alms. So when Jesus and His disciples left the temple area they passed by a man begging for alms. The reason this man was begging was because he was blind, and had been blind from birth.

Being blind means, of course, that you cannot see anything. And while blind people can still walk and hear and talk they cannot see what is in front of them, or the person talking to them, or the person they are talking to. Imagine sending a blind person into a maze. They would never be able to get out. A blind person only sees darkness.

The words "light" and "darkness" are important words in the gospel of John. In Chapter 1:4, 5 John writes, "In [the Word] was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it." In Chapter 3: 19-20 Jesus speaks about how men are in darkness and they hate the light and will not come into the light. And in verse 21 our Lord says, "But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." Darkness means sin. Light means Jesus Christ. As sinners we are unable to see because all is dark. In Jesus Christ we see clearly for He is the light. So when we read that Jesus and His disciples see a blind man, that is a man who has no light and only sees darkness, we need to think of more than just someone with a handicap or physical disability, we need to think about someone who is physically like we are spiritually. He could not see the light of the sun just as we cannot see the Light of the Son. When we understand this we can understand what Jesus says about this blind man.

When we sit down with our families to eat, where does the food come from? We might say that it comes from our Mom. She prepares the food and places it on the table. Or we might say that it comes from our Dad. He is the one who earns the money to buy the food so that Mom can prepare it. You might say that our food comes from the grocery store because that is where we buy it. Or you might say we get our food from farmers who grow the crops. And all of these answers would be right. But what about the Lord? Does He have a place in how we receive our food?

Think of it this way. When we sit down to eat a meal what is the first thing we do? Do we thank Mom for preparing the meal? Do we thank Dad for making the money to buy the food? Do we call up the grocer or the farmer to thank them for making the food available for us? No, before we eat the first thing we do is thank the Lord. We pray. But why do we thank the Lord? Is it because God is the one who sends the rain and the sun so that the crops can grow? Is God involved in providing us food only because He makes the sun rise in the morning, sends the rain in its season, and maintains creation by His providence so that we all have food to eat? Or is there more? To answer these questions we first need to go all the way back to the very beginning of the world, to when the only people alive were Adam and Eve.

In Genesis 2 verses 8, 9 we read that the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground - trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. There were no groceries stores of course but the Lord made sure that Adam and Eve had enough to eat, in fact more than enough. Before Adam or Eve ever lifted a finger to work there was plenty of food for them to eat. What that means is

3. When Jesus came to the disciples on the water they were terrified. Why? Did they expect Jesus? Did they think Jesus could come to them in their time of need? What should we expect when we face various trials and difficulties? To whom should we turn for help and strength?

the Lord not want to give His people food anymore? Of course not. It was just that the way Israel received their food changed. All the olive orchards, vineyards and fields of the Canaanites became the Israelites. All Israel had to do was move in. By God's grace Israel received new homes they did not build and food they did not plant. God provided His people food again. And the reason God did this was because of Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus Christ came to earth, because He suffered and died upon the cross, and because He rose again on the third day, Jesus Christ paid for our sin and removed the consequences of sin from our lives. And one of those consequences was that we had to work hard for our food. By giving food to the five thousand Jesus was giving us a picture of Paradise, it was like we were allowed to peek into heaven to see what the Lord was going to do for His people. The five thousand men that receive the bread and the fish, and all the other people that had come along as well, wives and children, did not have to work for their food. Jesus gave it to them freely. That is what Paradise was like for Adam and Eve. And that is what Paradise will be like for us. God not only cares for our souls but also for our bodies. God not only provides us the forgiveness of sins He also provides us with strength to serve Him. And all of this because of Jesus Christ. All we have to do now is serve Him.

In 2 Thessalonians 3: 10 the Apostle Paul says, "For even when we were with you, we gave this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." Why should someone who doesn't work not eat? Is it because he has not earned the right to eat? No. It is because such a person, someone who does not work, is a person that does not appreciate or value what Jesus Christ has done. They are not thankful to God for Jesus Christ. If they were, they would work. Man has always been called to serve the Lord by working hard. Even Adam had to work hard in Paradise; Israel too had to work hard in Canaan. Not because they could get lots of food but because they had lots of food. Their work was a sign of

the Sea and a storm came upon them so that the disciples were certain they were going to drown. At that time Jesus stood up and rebuked the wind and the waves making the Sea calm again. This time though Jesus was not with them, He was still up in the mountains. Because He was so far away and because the storm had now covered the Sea, Jesus probably could not even see His disciples on the Sea. It seems almost certain that the disciples will drown. But then something miraculous happens.

The disciples were just about in the middle of the Sea, having rowed about three or three and a half miles. Surrounded only by water the disciples suddenly see a strange figure walking towards them. How could this be? If you were in the middle of a large lake, three miles from the shore, would expect to see someone walking towards you? This is why the disciples were so terrified. We know the story of Jesus walking on the water so we are not so amazed, but for the disciples this was unheard of, it contradicted everything they knew. No man could walk on water, and no man could walk all the way to the middle of a stormy Sea. Who was this man? This was Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God!

We can easily imagine that before Jesus came to the disciples they thought they were lost for sure. After all, the only one who could help them reach the shore safely was Jesus, and He was far away in the mountains. There seemed to be no way the Lord could help His disciples from so far away. Sometimes we find ourselves in similar situations. Sometimes we face situations in life that are very difficult and we don't know how we can get through them. And when we are faced with such a situation we might think Jesus is too far away to help us. We are here on earth facing various trials and Jesus is all the way in heaven, sitting at the right hand of His Father. Will He see us in our problem? Will He know that we are afraid? Will He be able to help us from so far away? When we face those kinds of situations we just need to remember this miracle.

3. Sometimes we think that Jesus only came to earth to do some pretty important and big things. Jesus came to save us from death, to earn for us eternal life, and to provide forgiveness of sins in His blood. When we think about the clothes we buy, or the food we eat, or any other material blessing we do not usually think about Jesus. How can we learn from the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10:31?

Always remember this very important point. The world would make us think that our faith is just make-believe. It's not. It's fact. Thomas knew it was fact. The ten other Apostles knew it was fact. And we can know it is fact. If ever you wonder whether Jesus is really the Saviour, the One who has washed us clean in His blood, remember Thomas' words, "My Lord and My god." Be confident, be assured, and be comforted. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing in Him we have life in His name.

For discussion:

1. There are many, many religions to choose from in this world. Name some of the religions you know that are different from Christianity. Who came up with these religions? Can the gods of these false religions save their people? Read Isaiah 44:15-20. How does the Lord describe the false gods? What can these false gods do?

2. The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Science tells us this is impossible. Why is it so important that Jesus Christ truly rose from the dead? Think about what it would mean if He had not. Think of Romans 6:23 and Genesis 2:17. Why did death come into the world? If Jesus did not rise from the dead then He is still in the grave, what would this tell us about Jesus? Would it mean He was perfect or a sinner? Can a sinner save us?

The truth is that the only One who can truly save us is the Messiah of God, the One who God chooses as our substitute. It is not up to us to decide which way of salvation we would like. The way of salvation is only made possible by God's will. So which way is that? Obviously this is an important matter.

You might think this is an easy question. The only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. And you would be right too. But not everyone believes this. Many people today think there are many ways to be saved. How do we know that ours is the right one? How do we know that Jesus, a man who lived almost 2000 years ago, who lived in a forgotten part of the Roman Empire, who was a carpenter's son from the town of Nazareth, how do we know that He is the Messiah, the One who saves us, the One who delivers us from the judgment of God and gives us life eternal? How do we know? It is this questions that John answers for us in his Gospel account.

You see John is not interested in just telling us a nice story or reporting some amazing miracles. John wants to show us the majesty and the glory of this person Jesus, and more than that, John wants us to see that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, the One in whom we find the salvation of our souls. How do we know that by believing in Jesus Christ we are saved? John is going to show us.

Jesus did not perform miracles to prove He was powerful. Through Him all things were made and without Him nothing was made that has been made. All of creation is evidence of Jesus' power. Jesus did not perform miracles to prove He loves His people. The very fact that He was conceived and born shows that. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The reason Jesus performed miracles was to prove that He was the Christ, the Anointed One of God, our prophet, priest and King. The miracles of Jesus revealed that He was truly the Son of God. You might say that the miracles of Jesus were like signs that pointed us to who Jesus really is. The miracles not the amazing thing as much as the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us from our sins. That is what John wants us to see, and that is what we need to believe.

Christ. Science tells us that Christ could not possibly have risen from the dead since no man can start his heart or put breath in his lungs once he has passed away. It is physically impossible. Which means the story of the resurrection of Jesus is just that, a story, a myth, a superstitious fable. And many Christians accept that. They say, "It doesn't matter whether Jesus actually rose from the dead. What matters is whether you believe He did." Such people think faith is about ideas and truths that you hold in your heart, whether they are actually true or not. But it is very important to our faith that Jesus rose from the dead, truly and physically, and not just in peoples minds.

Take some time to read what the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15. In that chapter of the Bible Paul tells us just how important it is that Jesus was raised from the dead, not just because we think He did, but because He actually and truly did. It was so important that people understand that Jesus rose from the dead in truth that our Lord told His disciples to touch Him. In Luke 24:39 Jesus says, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." And because the disciples still could hardly believe what they were seeing Jesus asked them for something to eat and they gave Him a fish. He took the fish and ate it in their presence. Can someone who is not alive, who is not physically alive, eat a fish? Have you ever hear of a ghost eating a fish? Of course not. Only living, breathing and very physical people have teeth to chew and throats to swallow. Jesus was truly alive. And if we think that the 10 disciples who saw the Lord in Luke 24 were mistaken, think of Thomas.

The 10 disciples to who our Lord appeared were not the only ones who had a hard time believing Jesus was really risen from the dead. Thomas could hardly imagine such a thing was even possible. He was skeptical. So Jesus came to Him as well. And in from of the other disciples Jesus again proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that He was truly alive, He had truly risen from

3. John wrote his gospel so that "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." Do we have to believe only once? How do we continue to strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ?

3. Everyone thinks they're going to heaven but only Christians know they are. Why? In whom is our hope; is it in ourselves or in the Lord? Why does trusting the Lord give us real confidence? How should we then live? Should we live for ourselves or for the Lord? Why is living by faith more than just saying, "I believe I'm saved"?

from those days we would see that the city of Cana was in the northern part of Palestine right between the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee. What this tells us is that we are in the heart of a very special place. Cana was not just anywhere in the world. Cana was a part of Israel, which means Cana was a city in the Promised Land. We should not overlook this important fact.

As God's people the nation of Israel enjoyed a special relationship to the Lord their God. They were His chosen ones to whom the great promise of redemption had been given. That made Israel totally different than all the other nations around her. Her relationship with the Lord was so special, in fact, that throughout the Old Testament we read Israel spoken of as the bride of the Lord. The Song of Solomon is an entire book devoted to this imagery. Psalm 45 is a Psalm that describes this relationship beautifully. All of this means that a Jewish wedding day was not only a day to rejoice with the newlyweds, it was a day to rejoice over the love of the Bridegroom for His Bride, that is, of the Lord for His people.

Now we can understand why Jesus chose to perform His first miracle at a wedding. Jesus is the Bridegroom of His Bride the Church. In the book of Revelation Jesus is spoken of as the Bridegroom and the Church as the Bride. When Jesus came to earth He came to redeem His Bride, to buy her back, Jesus came to claim His Bride for Himself. What better place to announce the beginning of this work than at a wedding, at a place where love is celebrated and where the joy of God's love toward His people is remembered and displayed? A wedding was the perfect place for our Lord to declare to His Bride that He had come to redeem her. This wonderful message is shown even more in the miracle itself.

A Jewish wedding was a festive and joyous occasion and could last as long as seven days. This meant that many guests would be coming and going and it was the host's responsibility to make sure these guests were taken care of. This meant that the Bridegroom not only had to make sure there was enough food and drink for his guests, but also that there was enough water. Not water to drink though, water to wash with.

By faith in Christ we live and never die. Listen to what Jesus told Martha. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me, will never die." This is the wonder of what our Lord accomplished on the cross of Calvary. We see this a little more in the next lesson. But just think about this for a moment. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ will never die! Think of it. In Christ we never die. What a freedom we have then. What a blessing is ours.

The world scurries about trying to cling to life. They try to look young with their plastic surgery. They try to make a million dollars before they're thirty so they can retire early and do what they want. They try to be popular and famous because they know that sooner than later they will die. And that scares them. But we don't need to fear death. Nobody likes talking about death, and that's ok. But we never have to be afraid of death.

In Jesus Christ our lives never end. Think about that for a minute. That changes the way you live your life today. For most people time is passing away very quickly, with every tick of the clock their lives get closer to the end. That means they have to try to get every last bit of enjoyment from their lives that they can. Like someone who goes to a carnival trying to see every sight, trying to taste every food, and trying to experience every moment, they end up running from here to there, never actually enjoying themselves, so worried that they will miss some enjoyment. And all the while they keep worrying about when all the fun is going to end. We don't have to live this way.

In Christ we can say with the Apostle Paul, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." When our lives are lived in faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, when we confess with our mouths and show in our lives that we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, then we can also know and be sure that when we live this life we will be received into the next and will one day return to this earth to serve the Lord in perfection. Our service in this life is not a waste of time. The sacrifices that we make in this

In the Old Testament wine was a symbol of God's rich blessings toward His people. Wine is a rich drink that represents wealth and blessing even today. While it is true that some people abuse wine and drink too much of it that does not make wine itself bad. Wine is a blessing and a gift of God. And wine is used by God to represent joy and happiness. So when Jesus turns the water of purification into wine it is so that His people can rejoice and be happy. And why shouldn't they? This was a great day. The Bridegroom had come to redeem His Bride.

Hopefully we all now see why Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding in Cana. But don't forget what we studied last time. John doesn't just want us to see what Jesus did the way we watch a TV show or the way we read a storybook. Not only do we need to understand why Jesus performed this miracle we need to believe what we see. To put it simply this means that we need to rejoice in the great blessing of our Lord's redeeming work. It's not enough to watch from the sidelines, we have to join the celebration and thank the Lord for His great work on our behalf. So let's thank the Lord and praise Him for what He has done for us.

For discussion:

1. Sometimes you hear people say, "First impressions last a lifetime." This means that quite often people remember you by the first time they met you. What impression do you have of Jesus ministry after His first miracle? How should God's people respond to the work of Jesus? Do we always rejoice in salvation or do we sometimes think serving the Lord is too hard or too boring? Why do the Scriptures always speak of salvation as a time of great rejoicing?

authorities. The Sadducees and the Pharisees had made it clear that they wanted to arrest Jesus, and to kill Him. It was because of this threat to Jesus' life that He and the disciples had crossed over the Jordan. There was a little bit of safety on the other side of the Jordan. And now they were being asked to go back across the Jordan, and what's worse, to Bethany, a town just outside of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was where the rulers of the Jews were. If they went there it would be like going into the lion's den. While the disciples may have loved Lazarus they feared the Jews even more and so they were afraid of going back.

But Jesus insisted that they return, and He did so for a very good reason. Despite all the disciples arguments against returning Jesus offers one very good reason for returning to Bethany, "so that you may believe." Now that seems like a strange thing to say. Is Jesus saying that the disciples did not believe? Why did they have to go to Bethany in order that they might believe?

The answer to this question lies in the mistake the disciples made about returning to Bethany. Why were the disciples so afraid? It was because they thought Jesus would get captured and killed. But that was exactly what was supposed to happen. It was for that very reason that Jesus had taken on a human body. Unless He suffered and died there could be no redemption, no forgiveness of sins, no eternal life. Someone had to die for sin. God had said, "When you eat of it you will surely die." Death was the punishment for sin, sin was brought into the world by man, a man must die for sin. Staying away from Jerusalem may have seemed like a good idea for the disciples, but unless Jesus went to Jerusalem no one would be saved.

The disciples did not think this way yet, and we should not be too hard on them for it. We have the advantage of living in the light of our Lord's resurrection. We know what happened. They, however, did not know what was going to happen. They still thought that if a man died that was the end, nothing more could be done, life was over. They still thought of in terms of life and death. It was this thinking that Jesus was going to correct in Bethany.

Lesson 3

Read John 4:43-54

In our study of the miracles of Jesus in the book of John we come now to the second miracle. Obviously this was not the second miracle Jesus ever performed. This is just the second miracle John records for us. The reason we know that Jesus had already performed many miracles is seen in the crowds that were following our Lord. As our Lord travelled through the land more and more people began following Him. They all wanted to see and to hear Jesus. The problem was these crowds did not follow Jesus because they wanted to see the Son of God and hear the Word of the Messiah; they wanted to see and hear a magician who performed great works.

Even today we see how people are quick to follow Jesus. We hear about big crusades and about nation wide evangelism efforts that claim to bring thousands of people to Christ. In these crusades people are told that Jesus can make them healthy and make them rich; Jesus can make them happy and fulfilled. And because people are curious and want to see if Jesus will indeed do all these amazing things they join the church for a time. But very quickly almost 90% of those who join through these crusades leave the faith. They become disappointed because they don't experience what their leaders promised, they don't see the amazing things happening. And so they walk away.

It is this same danger that our Lord warns us about in this miracle. It is not enough to know about Jesus. It is not even enough to think He can do amazing things. To have faith in Jesus Christ means to look to Him for salvation, for the forgiveness of our sins. It means to say that our only comfort in life and in death is that we belong to Jesus Christ. That is what Jesus wants us to see in this miracle.

Some people deal with death by thinking that science can save them. They hope that doctors will cure them of their diseases or that somehow the way to stop the body from aging will be discovered while they are still alive. Such people place their trust in the intelligence of man; hoping man will find the cure for death. Sadly these people have misplaced their trust, for there is only One who can defeat death.

In our study of the miracles recorded in the book of John we have been comforted by the revelation of Jesus Christ as the One who heals our sicknesses, as the One who feeds us, as the One who is ever with us, and as the One who opens our eyes the glorious truth of our Father's love for us. All of these things are good and comforting, but they are meaningless if they are only true in this life, that is, even if we have the greatest life, even if we are the richest, healthiest, and most famous person in the whole world, it means nothing if we are judged in death. Death is, after all, a judgment.

Remember how, in the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam and Eve, "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." This is the first time we hear about death in the Bible and it is connected with disobeying God. If Adam was disobedient his punishment was death. The Apostle Paul says it a little bit different when he says, "the wages of sin is death." What this means is that death is not some natural thing that happens like rain and snow. Death is not something that can be changed or removed. Death is the judgment of God upon sin. And unless that judgment is removed death remains. As long as death remains Solomon's words remain true, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

For this very reason Jesus Christ came in the flesh. The very heart of the gospel message declares this. We are saved by grace through faith. But what are we saved from? Is it sickness? Is it poverty? Is it sadness? Or is it the judgment of God upon sin? Obviously it is the last one. Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins, and from the consequences of those sins, that is, from God's judgment. That is what this miracle is all about.

just like all the other people following Jesus! He saw Jesus as a magician, as a miracle healer, as someone who could do amazing things. That is why he came to Jesus. The royal official did not come because he believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. The royal official just thought Jesus could perform His magic on his son.

Thinking of Jesus as only a miracle worker is not what we need to do. If Jesus is only able to do magical things then we are still no better off in life. Only if Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God can we have any hope. Only when we believe in Him for salvation can we know that we are saved. Which is precisely why Jesus performed the miracle the way He did. Jesus wanted the royal official and all the people following Him to see beyond the miracle, the amazing.

Remember that the people wanted to see a miracle, they wanted to "oohh" and "aahh". Instead of satisfying their desire to be impressed Jesus heals the royal official's son without anyone seeing it. The sick boy was a good distance away from where Jesus was and from where the crowds were. The sick boy was lying in his house on his bed with only a few people watching over him. Instead of going to the boy and touching him or lifting him up, Jesus simply tells the royal official, "You may go. Your son will live." The royal official, who only thought of Jesus as a magician, now had to do one of two things.

Either he had to think Jesus was not powerful enough to save his son and was trying to get rid of him. Or the royal official had to believe that what Jesus said was true because Jesus was more than some magician. If Jesus can heal someone who lives far away and who is in his own room by himself, if Jesus could say the word and make a sickness disappear without even seeing the sick boy, that would make Jesus much more than a magician. The royal official had to decide. Would he reject Jesus and think that he had wasted his time? Or would he believe in Jesus as more than a magician, as more than miracle worker? By God's grace the royal official believed in Jesus.

2. The man born blind refused to listen to the Pharisees, even though they threatened him, tried to trick him and tried to pretend he was never actually blind. Yet through it all the man refused to accept the Pharisees teaching about Jesus. How should we react when the world or people we know say things about Jesus that are not true? The man born blind knew Jesus was from God because his eyes had been opened. How do we know that Jesus is the Son of God?

3. Every Sunday we hear the Word of God concerning salvation. Why is it important that we not only hear the Word of God but that we believe what we hear?

have not seen Him, but we must believe in Him. In John 20:29 Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." That is what this miracle demands from us. When God speaks to us through His Word we must believe. When God tells us that He has sent His Son to die for us we must believe. When God tells us that our sins are forgiven we must believe. Just like the Catechism says, "True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in His Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation."

For Discussion:

1. Why do you think Jesus said, "A prophet has no honour in His own country"? To answer this question, think about who Jesus was (the Son of God) and who people thought He was (just a miracle worker). How do you think people would react when they heard Jesus say He was the Son of God? How do people today react when they hear that Jesus is the Son of God? Do they believe that He is or do they think He was just a nice man who lived a long time ago? What do we believe?

2. Are there people today who follow Jesus because they want to see some amazing miracle? What are we supposed to believe about Jesus? (Think about John 20:31) When do we hear that God has promised to save us? (Think about when you were a little baby and what you do every Sunday.)

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when Jesus had found him Jesus said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Now that may seem like an odd question. After all this man had just been thrown out of the synagogue for defending Jesus. Was that not proof that this man born blind did believe? Indeed it was proof that he believed. But what did he believe? Was it just some magical display that really impressed him? Did this man born blind see only the power of the miracle but not the One who performed the miracle? Was this man excited because he could see or because of the One who had made him see? That is what Jesus is asking this man. Do you believe in the Son of Man, that is, having experienced the power of God's grace in Jesus Christ have you looked past the miracle to the miracle worker?

The man born blind answers at once, "Who is He, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in Him." Remember that the man born blind had not yet "seen" Jesus. When Jesus put the mud on this man's eyes he was still blind. It was not until Jesus said, "You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the one speaking with you" that the man "saw" Jesus for the first time. Immediately he said, "Lord, I believe" and he worshiped Him.

And now listen carefully to the closing words of this chapter. Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Who are the blind? We saw that in that last lesson. The blind are those who by nature are sinners and are in darkness because of their sin. It is to these people that Jesus has come so that, as Matthew says, "the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned" (Matt. 4: 16). The man born blind is like all men, but by God's grace in Jesus Christ we are given sight.

But then who are the one's who see? The answer to this question comes in the final verses of John 9. The Pharisees, hearing Jesus' words, ask "What? Are we blind too?" And Jesus answers, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now

came in the flesh. If Jesus is the Son of God then that means we have to do what He says, that means He alone can save us; that means we have to submit to Him. By nature, because we are sinners, we would much rather think we can save ourselves. But the fact is we cannot, no matter how hard we try. And that is a difficult pill to swallow. Just think of the man in our story.

The man in this miracle had been paralysed for 38 years. We don't know how old this man was but 38 years is a very long time to be paralysed. Being paralysed means not being able to move. Can you imagine not being able to move for 38 years? But what was maybe even worse was that there was the possibility that this paralysed man could be healed. That may not seem worse, but listen to the story.

The apostle John tells us that this paralysed man was sitting by a pool called Bethesda. This was no ordinary pool; there was something very special about the water in this pool. As the story goes the water of the pool, which normally stood still, would suddenly stir up. The first person to enter into the pool would be cured of their disease. Needless to say there were many people lying about this pool. Can you imagine? All you would have to do was be the first in the pool. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Not for the man in the story it wasn't.

Remember that this man was paralysed meaning he could not move. When the water stirred everyone would try to be the first one in but this man, no matter how much he wanted to be first, could never make it on time, after all he was paralysed. All he could do was sit and hope. Hope that someone would help him, hope that a loved one, a friend, or even a kind stranger would help him get into the water first after it started to stir. You see although this man was seated so close to the cure he might as well have been thousands of miles away. This poor paralysed man. He wanted to get better. He knew how to get better. All he had to do was go into the pool when it stirred. He was allowed to go in but he was unable to go in. Sometimes you hear people say, "So

taught; they taught that salvation came by following every letter of the law. Through Jesus' ministry the Pharisees resisted Jesus and worked against Him. So when this healed blind man came to the Pharisees it was just another instance of the power of Jesus displayed before the eyes of these Pharisees. And another one that made the Pharisees very mad.

One of the great examples of the Pharisees "misuse" of the law was the Sabbath day. For proper Sabbath observance the Pharisees had constructed more rules than for any other day. So when we read that it was on the Sabbath that Jesus healed the blind man we need to understand that this was a terrible offence to the Pharisees. This made them really mad, so mad in fact that they were unwilling to see the obvious.

When the man born blind stood before the Pharisees he told them his story. The first thing the Pharisees say is, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath." It was not the Sabbath of God that Jesus was breaking. As Jesus says in Mark 2:27 "the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath", meaning that it was not the Pharisees that determined how the Sabbath day was to be observed, it was Jesus Christ Himself. And if He, as Lord of the Sabbath, worked miracles on the Sabbath it was not because He was breaking His own rules! It was because He was keeping them most perfectly. But the Pharisees refused to recognize Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. The problem was, the evidence of Jesus' power was displayed in the man born blind.

Some of the Pharisees found it hard to deny the obvious. They said, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs." That the man born blind could now see was clearly a miracle only God could perform. If Jesus was a sinner then why did God heal the man born blind? God does not listen to the request of sinners, only of the righteous. If Jesus was a sinner then God would not have given the blind man sight, but the fact was this blind man was no longer blind. The evidence was hard to deny.

In John 1:3-5 the Apostle John wrote this about Jesus, "Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." Listen carefully to those last few words, "The Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it." What was happening in this story? The Light was standing right in front of this paralysed man and the paralysed man did not know who it was that was talking to Him.

And then something even more incredible happens. Even though this man did not know who was talking to him Jesus still said, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." Think about this. This man did not know who Jesus was and had not asked for Jesus to cure him. He was just sitting beside the pool unable to move. He did not even recognize Jesus for who He is. And still Jesus cured him, made him well, and gave strength to legs that had not walked for 38 years. What amazing grace!

Usually we think we should be saved because we're worth it or because we've done the right things. The fact is if it were left up to us we would not know about Jesus even if He stood right in front of us. We would think that He was just another good man or nice man but we would not be able to think of Him as the Christ, the Son of God, who redeems His people from their sins. And yet despite our never being able to learn this on our own Jesus still came to die for our sins.

Have you ever wondered why you were born into the family you are born into? Have you ever wondered why you go to church every Sunday while many other people your age don't? Have you ever thought why you may go to Kingdom Seekers and other kinds of Bible Studies while other people don't want to? Sometimes we think that everything to do with Church is boring or something we shouldn't have to do. But think about what we've learned from our parents and from our teachers and from our Church. We've learned that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. We know that

There are some people who think that by nature man is not totally that blind, he can see a little bit. All we have to do is show people Jesus Christ and they will see Him as their Saviour. The reality is that, like the blind man, by sin we cannot see a thing and cannot give ourselves sight at all. But Jesus can and does by His work on the cross. When we go to Him, the One who was sent by the Father, then our eyes are opened to the glorious truth of His saving grace.

For discussion:

1. Why was this man blind? The disciples, when they saw the man born blind, thought there must have been a specific sin that caused this disease, either the blind man's or his parents. Sometimes we think the same kind of thing when we face trials. We think God might be punishing us for our sins. Why is it easier to deal with God's discipline this way? (Think about why God disciplines us, and whether we like it or not. If we do not like it we want to get rid of it. How is connecting trials, like sickness with specific sins, an easier way to deal with the trial?)
2. Why is blindness a good description of how we are by nature? Think about how Jesus is the "light" of the world. Can we "see" Him by nature or does the Lord need to open our eyes by His grace? How does this make us dependent upon the Lord?
3. Jesus sent the blind man to the pool of Siloam, which means, "Sent" or "Sent One". To whom should we send the spiritually blind?

2. How was the paralysed man in this story like all of us by nature? How can this problem be changed? What happened to this paralysed man when Jesus healed him? What happens to us when we are saved from our sin? How could you tell that the paralysed man was better? How can you tell that we are better?

3. Jesus is the Son of God and by believing in Him we have eternal life. How should we respond to this good news? Should we shrug our shoulders and say, "Yah, so?" Should we be happy and thankful? If we are thankful to God for all the blessings in our lives how should we live? Should we do what we want or what God wants?

The disciples thought that because this man was blind he must have done something wrong. Blindness was seen as a punishment for sin. The problem was this man was blind from birth. How can his blindness be punishment for some sinful action since the punishment came before the sinful action? Maybe his parents sinned, the disciples thought. All they see in front of them is a man who was punished for some sin, either his or his parents. To answer their questions the disciples turn to Jesus. Jesus turns them to the real issue.

Jesus said, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned but this happened so that the work of God, might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." In order to understand what our Lord is saying we need to break this statement into smaller pieces.

The first piece is this, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." Jesus is not suggesting that this man and his parents were perfect, as though they had never, ever sinned. The disciples thought that because the man was blind there must have been a sin that deserved this punishment. Jesus tells them that they are thinking along the wrong lines. The reason this man was born blind was so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. God had prepared this man for the day Jesus would meet him, and would heal him of his blindness. And by healing the blind man Jesus was showing how His light pierces the darkness bringing sight where there was no sight. By nature we are in darkness. By grace we are in light. When the Lord gives us sight, when He shows us the light, it is always to the glory of God.

The second piece is this, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent me." This line will become important later on, but for now notice what this means about Jesus' work. The disciples wanted to stop and have a nice theological debate with the blind man as exhibit "A". Jesus, however, reminds them

that Adam and Eve did not have to work in order to eat. They had to work. God gave Adam a very unique job he had to rule over creation. But the Lord did not say to Adam, "When you do your work then you will get to eat." The food was already there, Adam did not have to work for it at all.

Sin changed everything though. After Adam disobeyed the LORD God put Adam and Eve outside of the Garden. No longer could Adam just walk around and eat as much food as he needed. Now, the LORD said, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." (Genesis 3:17-19) Before the fall Adam and Eve had more than enough food. After the fall they had to work for their food. If they did not work they did not eat. The Lord still sent the rain and the sun to make the crops grow. But now life was hard and work was necessary for food. But then Jesus came.

The first Adam in the Garden of Eden had brought us into sin and the consequences of sin. But the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ, came to redeem us. In Adam we were tied up by sin in Christ we become untied, freed to enjoy all the blessings that Adam had thrown away. In Adam we were put outside of Paradise. In Christ we are brought back into Paradise. And in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand Jesus shows us that as the Christ He had come to earth to restore God's people to their place within God's blessed Kingdom.

Think about Israel in the desert when they wandered for forty years. What did they eat? There is no food in the desert, certainly not enough food for the many Israelites. But God gave them food in the manna and in the quail. They did not have to work for that food, they received it first and then worked.

The same thing was true when Israel entered into the Promised Land. On the very first day that Israel came into Canaan, God stopped sending the manna and the quail. Why? Did

Lesson 7

Read John 9:1-12

In our study of the miracles of Jesus we come to the second last miracle that the Apostle John records. Each of the miracles John reports in this Gospel are carefully chosen and all have one goal in mind. As John says at the end of his book, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." We have seen how this is true in each of the other miracles, and this is also true of this, the second last miracle John records.

What makes this miracle unique is that it turns our attention now to what it means that we confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. While we may think that this is the most obvious truth there is, while we might think no one could ever deny this truth, the fact is there are many who not only refuse to admit that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, there are people who actually persecute believers for this. It is one thing to say, "I'm a believer" when we are at home with our family, or when we are at our Christian school, or when we are in church. In all of these places everyone agrees with us. But when we go outside of these places, when we go to work where there are unbelievers, when we play sports with unbelievers, when we interact with unbelievers in our day-to-day lives we find that not everyone agrees, and that some people even think we are terribly wrong and off track. What do we do then? That is what this story is about. Because this story has so much important information we are going to do two lessons on it. The first lesson will focus on the miracle. The second lesson will focus on what followed the miracle.

their thankfulness to God. That is why in 1 Corinthians 10:31 the Apostle Paul says, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do; do it all for the glory of God." That is why, before we eat, we first pray, to thank the Lord for the food we have, food that is ours because of what Jesus Christ has done. And that is why we work hard, to show the Lord how happy we are for all the blessings we have in Jesus Christ. Even our food.

For discussion:

1. When we listen to the news we sometimes hear about droughts and famines. In North America we have lots of food but in other parts of the world there is sometimes not enough food. What is the cause of this problem? Is it just that people do not know how to work the land properly or is there a deeper problem? Can we solve that deeper problem? Who can?

2. Sometimes you hear people say, "Another day, another dollar." What that means is that they don't really like to work but at least they made more money by working. Is that how we should think about our work? How were Adam and Eve supposed to think about their work before the fall? How about after the fall? How did Jesus change work? How do we today think about work? How should we treat all the material blessings we have (like clothes, food, or money)?

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. That means He sees everything, knows everything, and can help us no matter what we face. If Jesus could come to His disciples, even though they were far away and in the middle of a Sea, then Jesus can also come to us, even though He is in heaven and we are on earth. We are never so far from Jesus that He cannot reach us. We are never out of His sight. The disciples needed to learn that Jesus was more than just a man, that He was God. And we need to remember this too. Like the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:38, 39, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." When we feel far from God, when we think He cannot be near us, that He cannot help us, remember this story and turn to Jesus for help and strength, knowing He is there.

For Discussion:

1. What was the biggest concern of the people Jesus fed? How did their concern affect the way they saw Jesus? What is our biggest problem in life? Why is Jesus the only One able to deliver us from our biggest problem?

2. Where was Jesus when the disciples left in their boat? Why was it a bad time to go out on the Sea of Galilee? What happened to the disciples on the Sea? What was their situation like? How do we face similar situations?

Lesson 6

Read John 6:16-24

The writer of Hebrews tells us, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." We might also call this the challenge of faith. It is not always easy believing what you don't see. Maybe you have played the game where two people stand close together, one in front of the other, and the person in front, without looking behind them, falls backwards, trusting that the person behind will catch them before they hit the floor. Even though we know that no one would let us fall to the floor and hurt ourselves we still wonder if that person behind us will catch us in time. We doubt what we cannot see. The challenge of faith is to rest completely in the hand of God even though we do not see Him, even when everything around us seems to point to in a different direction.

After Jesus fed the five thousand the people wanted to make Him king by force. The people had the wrong idea about Jesus. All the people saw was the miraculous way Jesus gave them food. They liked this idea of a man who made something out of nothing, who could feed that many people with only five small barley loaves and two small fish. This was a powerful man; this was the kind of man that should be king, the people thought. For many years Israel had been suffering under the rule of the Roman Empire and they thought Jesus could make them a great nation again.

All the people thought about was their immediate situation. If you asked the people there that day what their biggest problem was they would probably say, "The Roman Empire." And because the people thought their biggest problem was the Roman Empire all they wanted in a deliverer was someone who could defeat the Roman Empire. But the Roman Empire was not Israel's biggest problem. The biggest problem everyone faces in this world is the problem of sin. By nature we are so completely

wrapped up in sin that we cannot get loose by our own strength. That is why Jesus came to this earth, and that is what the people needed to see in Jesus; that He was the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him they may have life in His name. All the people wanted was someone to defeat the Roman Empire, but Jesus had come to defeat sin and death. And that is why, when the people came to make Him king by force, He withdrew again to a mountain by Himself. These people did not yet understand their helpless condition and so did not see the need for Jesus Christ. They saw Jesus only as a really powerful earthly king who could deliver them from the Roman Empire, but not as a powerful heavenly king, who had come to deliver them from sin and death.

The people who had been fed by Jesus were not the only ones who missed the greatness of Jesus Christ. The story we read in this lesson shows the disciples did too. Jesus had gone into the mountains by Himself, leaving His disciples and the large crowd of people by themselves. After all while the sun began to set and the disciples decided it was time to go home. The disciples waited as long as they could for Jesus to come back to them, but He did not come back. Now remember that many of these disciples were experienced fishermen who knew the Sea of Galilee quite well. They knew that the Sea of Galilee could go from a calm glassy sea to a raging mixing bowl in minutes. During the day this was not as much a problem. During the day fishermen could see the storm clouds rising and could quickly head for shore. But at night, when everything is dark, when you cannot see the storm clouds and when you cannot see the shore, a storm on the Sea of Galilee was a dangerous thing. And it was dark when the disciples climbed in their boat and headed home.

While they were out on the waters a storm came upon with strong winds and big waves. In a storm like this the disciples could easily find themselves capsized and without a boat. It was a very dangerous situation. This had happened before. In Matthew 8 we read of a time when the Lord and His disciples were crossing