
THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

Thomas Jefferson (third president of the US, 1801–1809) was fascinated by Jesus. He believed that the ethical teachings of Jesus were the greatest the world had ever known. As a result, Jefferson put together a book entitled *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. For it, he sifted through every verse in the four Gospels and extracted only those which he thought expressed the pure principles of Jesus. He then arranged the selected verses into chronological order. Over time the volume became known as *The Jefferson Bible* and for many years it was distributed to every new member of the US Congress.

But a review of *The Jefferson Bible* today quickly reveals that something very important is missing: Jefferson removed all references to Jesus' miracles or to his resurrection. Although Thomas Jefferson believed Jesus was a great moral teacher, he simply couldn't accept the supernatural aspects of his life and ministry.

In our next 10 readings, we'll consider the miracles of Jesus. The first set is a collection of five 'supernatural events' – changing water into wine, calming the sea, feeding more than 5,000 people from a few loaves of bread and fish, walking on water, and causing a fig tree to wither.

In fact, *all* of Jesus' miracles could be called supernatural, but this first set highlights his power to overrule the forces of nature. In the second set we'll cover six healing miracles of Jesus. Once we've completed these readings, which cover much of the material Thomas Jefferson removed from his 'Bible', we'll see why the miracles are an indispensable part of the **Essential JESUS**.

We'll also discover that Jesus performed miracles for a variety of reasons. Of course, at the most basic level, Jesus wanted to meet the needs of the people around him. But, beyond that, Jesus' miracles were *signs* that had two other purposes. As John tells us at the end of his account of Jesus' first miracle – turning water into wine – they *revealed his glory* and they *helped people put their faith in him*. Jesus' miracles were intended to help people believe that he was the Son of God, which is why it's important not to skip over them.

Date:

The miracles of Jesus

PRAY Father, sometimes my understanding of you seems tired or stale. Please guide me into a fresh, new relationship with you.

READ John 2:1–11

REFLECT

I once attended a wedding where the caterer's van, loaded with all the food, was stolen before the reception. While the hosts scrambled behind the scenes to solve the problem, the guests waited and waited... and then began discussing how they could help. In the end, the hosts somehow found enough food for everyone and the wedding was a great success.

Perhaps a desire to help was the original motivation behind Mary's comment to her son at this wedding (2:3). But, judging from Jesus' response, it seems she also had something else in mind. She wanted everyone to know the secret she had been pondering all these years: her son was God's promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world (Luke 2:19). It's only natural for a mother to want to show off her son.

But Jesus always resisted the temptation to use his power to show off (John 7:3–9). By saying, 'My time has not yet come,' he makes clear he had a much bigger agenda in mind. Jesus had come to fulfill the mission given to him by his heavenly Father, not his earthly mother.

John adds a comment to make sure his readers get the point (2:11). Jesus performed miracles first of all because they *revealed his glory*. They were evidence of his divine nature. But, second, they *helped people put their faith in him*. Jesus' mission was to help people believe that he was the Son of God.

So what is the significance of his first miracle? Some have said Jesus was blessing the use of wine, or that he was affirming the value of celebration. That may be part of it. But the deeper significance is far more profound. Jesus was signalling that he came to establish a new way for people to have a relationship with God – a way based not on keeping the Law of Moses (the complex list of rules begun with the Ten Commandments), but rather on having faith in him. The good news is that through Jesus we can now have this new relationship with God.

APPLY What things in your spiritual life are *old* and need to be replaced by something *new* from Jesus?

PRAY Jesus, show me how I can experience more of the new life you came to give.