

HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF JESUS, MIRACLES

There are many miracles of Jesus we could bring up here, but we shall instead turn to the fact that we even have non-Christian accounts of Jesus' miracles. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (AD 37-100) said, "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure," *Works of Josephus*, 379

As we can see, Josephus testified that Jesus "was a doer of wonderful works" (sensational miracles). Because Josephus was a very early historian, he would have had access to many of the people who were contemporaries of Jesus and who could have given firsthand testimony about His life. We also note that Josephus was commissioned by the Roman government to write the history of the Jews. As a result, he would have had access to all the official records surrounding Jesus' life and death. In addition, Josephus was not sympathetic to Jesus and His followers. He had no reason to slant his writing in a way that would have been favourable to Christianity. There was no historian with better credentials than Josephus when it came to the history of the Jews at the time of Jesus, the Christ.

In addition to Josephus, the Jewish Talmud (Jewish religious writings) of that time also acknowledged that Jesus performed miracles. A statement in the Jewish Talmud written not much later than AD 100 states that at the time of the Passover, Jesus of Nazareth was executed by crucifixion for the crime of sorcery. As we know, Jesus' enemies acknowledged His miracles but claimed He did them by Satan's power. That would make His miracles sorcery as the Jewish leaders interpreted them.

For Jesus' enemies to admit to His miracles is especially powerful testimony. In a court of law, testimony like this would have a high level of credibility because it came from what attorneys call a hostile witness, someone who would much prefer that what he was saying was not true. Such testimony is of great importance because it reveals that even Jesus' enemies admitted that He performed miracles. There was no doubt as to His miracles; the only question was the power behind them. We also take note of the many examples in the four Gospels of the Jewish leaders criticising Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. These leaders knew that performing miracles was one of the tests of true prophets, and they couldn't deny Jesus' miracles, so they instead attacked Him for supposedly violating the Sabbath, part of the moral code given by Moses. Disagreeing with Moses was a mark of false prophets. Jesus, however, was not violating what Moses had said; He was disagreeing with the Jewish leaders' faulty interpretation of Mosaic Law. These Jewish leaders, as we have seen, were legalists in the way they understood and applied the Law of Moses; but Jesus understood the Mosaic law much better than they did.

At the time, Jesus' miracles were common knowledge among the people living in and around Jerusalem, as Peter indicated in his speech at Pentecost when he said: "*Men of Israel, listen to these words! Jesus of Nazareth was a Man whom God commended to you, as you yourselves know, by miracles, wonders, and miraculous signs, which God worked among you through Him,*" (Acts 2:22). Paul similarly appealed to the many secular reports of Jesus' miracles when he said to King Agrippa: "*Yes, the king knows about these things, and I am also speaking frankly before him. For I am convinced that nothing at all of these things has escaped his notice, since this has not been done in a corner,*" (Acts 26:26).

As we know, some church leaders of our time also deny that Jesus performed such miracles. Miracles just don't happen, they often say. The miracles and the historical narrative, however, mesh together perfectly. You can't take the miracles out and have anything left. Jesus' enemies couldn't bring themselves to really accept the miracles either, even though they could not deny them. They couldn't accept the miracles because they refused to accept the implications. The same is true today. But refusing to accept the truth and the significance of Jesus' miracles puts a person in great peril. Jesus described the danger in this response: ²⁰ *Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles had been performed, because they had not repented:* ²¹ *"How terrible for you, Chorazin! How terrible for you, Bethsaida! For, if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* ²² *However, I tell you: it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the Day of Judgment than for you.* ²³ *As for you, Capernaum, you **will not be lifted up to heaven**, will you? **You will go down to hell.** For, if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.* ²⁴ *However, I tell you that it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom on the Day of Judgment than for you,"* (Matthew 11:20-24).

Resisting the testimony of the Holy Spirit regarding Jesus' miracles is done at great risk.

The miracles of Jesus are well-documented truths of history. There is objective and verifiable evidence that Jesus actually performed these miracles. Jesus did these miracles in genuine history as attested to by a number of credible historical documents. His miracles didn't simply establish Jesus as a true prophet; the extraordinary magnitude of His miracles established Him as God in the flesh - the Creator God of heaven and earth.