

The Miracles of Jesus

Miracle # 23

"Jesus Delivers A Boy Of A Demon"

(Mt 17:14-21, Luke 9:37-43, Mark 9:14-29)

Mark gives the most complete account of this miracle and of the conversation of Jesus with the father and his disciples. There is one significant difference in the accounts.

Matthew clearly identifies the young man's problem as epilepsy where both Mark and Luke identify the problem as **demon possession**. This may not be as strong a contradiction as it might first appear. Matthew is speaking of the **symptoms**, while Mark and Luke are identifying the **cause**. The symptoms as reported in Mark are clearly like those of epilepsy. The symptoms are severe convulsions, foaming at the mouth, grinding of the teeth, and rigidity of body. Because of the sudden unexpected attacks, he often fell into the fire and into the water (Mark 9:18).

Matthew 17:14-21

"And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, (15) "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. (16) So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." (17) Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me." (18) And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. (19) Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" (20) So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. (21) However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Luke 9:37-43

"Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. (38) Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, "Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child. (39) And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. (40) So I implored Your disciples to

cast it out, but they could not." (41) Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." (42) And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. (43) And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did"

Mark 9:14-29

"And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. (15) Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. (16) And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?" (17) Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. (18) And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." (19) He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." (20) Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. (21) So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. (22) And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." (23) Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes. (24) Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (25) When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!" (26) Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." (27) But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. (28) And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" (29) So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

The Background of the Miracle

(vv. 14-19)

"And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. (15) Immediately, when they saw

Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. (16) And He asked the scribes, "What are you discussing with them?" (17) Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. (18) And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not." (19) He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me."

While Jesus is on the Mount of Transfiguration with three of his disciples (Peter, James and John -Mark 9:1-13) a father of a stricken son came looking for Jesus. Since Jesus is not around, he looks up some of his disciples and asked them to perform an exorcism.

A very interesting scene greets the Lord and the three disciples as they return from the mountain. While three disciples were on the Mount with Jesus observing the trans-figuration the other nine were down below failing miserably in ministry. A father has brought his demon possessed son to the disciples to be healed. They have been unsuccessful. Their failure was not because they had not tried. In fact I have wondered if all nine of the disciples had tried their hand at exorcising the boy. Why had the disciples failed? We will never know for sure but it is possible that the disciples sought to do this depending on their own **strength**. Or it could have been that had attempted to turn this into some kind of showy **demonstration**, but whatever the reason they just could not heal this young man.

The disciples were humiliated and put to shame before the onlookers and especially the scribes who according to Mark's account (Mark 9:14) took advantage of this opportunity to harass the disciples.

O faithless generation how long shall I be with you?

To whom is Jesus referring when he accuses them of being a "faithless generation." Perhaps Jesus is referring to both the **scribes** and his own **disciples**. But His comment could also include the boy's father who failed to realize that Jesus alone was the source of healing power.

The Elements of the Miracle (vv. 20-25)

"Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. (21) So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. (22) And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." (23) Jesus said to

him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes. (24) Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (25) When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!"

Matthew adds in his account that the father got on his knees before Jesus. Dr. Luke (9:38) records him as saying "I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only son."

He is Possessed By A Demon

No one should ever imagine that Satan is a fictional force of evil. No one can afford to laugh and say that Satan is just a religious boogie man conjured up by crotchety old men to scare little children. From the lips of this father we hear him describe the power and influence of Satan over his son in four ways...

- The demon possessing his boy was A **FOUL SPIRIT**.
- This young man was possessed of A **DESTRUCTIVE SPIRIT**.
- The demon which controlled this young man was A **DEAF AND DUMB SPIRIT**.
- The demon possessing this child was also A **LUNATIC SPIRIT** (Matt. 17:15).

In the King James Version the word translated "epileptic" in later translations is translated "lunatic" or **moonstruck** it is from the Latin word "luna" for moon. Epilepsy which we have previously discussed was regarded at the time as a disgraceful disease and was believed to be connected with the moon.

If You Can Do Anything (9:22)

Jesus told the father to bring the boy to him. When the demon saw Jesus, it threw the boy into a seizure. With the boy in a convulsion at his feet, Jesus asked how long this had been going on in the boy's life. The father admitted that it had been happening since childhood and then asked a tremendous question, "***If You Can Do Anything to help us please do?***" Jesus immediately turns the matter back to the Father and says, "***If you can believe all things are possible.***"

Lord I Believe: Help My Unbelief. (9:24)

We do not know if the father had come to Jesus in confident **faith** or just as an act of a last **desperate** hope. But this incident demonstrates that whatever motivates a person to turn to Jesus, it is the coming that counts.

This father seems to summarize in one sentence, what is the greatest obstacle to spiritual growth in the Christian faith – **faltering** faith. This man was saying in essence that although he believed in what Jesus was able to do, he was still contending with **doubt**. He was saying, **"Yes, Lord I believe in what you can do ... I think!"** He was saying, **"Lord, I believe in your power, ... or at least I want to believe in your power!"**

Notice what Jesus did or rather what he did not do.

- He didn't say **"Sorry, you do not have enough faith.**
- He didn't say **"Muster up more faith and come back later."**
- He didn't say, **"Oh, I'm so sorry, but I can only do a miracle if you have certain amount of faith.**

It is not our faith, neither its strength, nor its quality, nor its quantity that matters, but Christ, the object of our strength!

Jesus simply took the boy by the hand and cast the demon out and that was that!

The Effect of the Miracle (vv. 26-29)

"Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead." (27) But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. (28) And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" (29) So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

In a remarkable display of divine power Jesus heals the young man and according to Luke account (v. 42) he restores the son back to his father.

The Multitude Was Amazed (Luke 9:43)

Luke records in verse forty-three, "And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did" When the multitude saw Him, they were "greatly amazed."

Why Could We Not Cast It Out (vv. 28-29)

Like most of us the disciples did not want to share their embarrassment with the entire world; they waited until they got back in the house.

They asked, **"Why couldn't we cast it out? We've cast out demons before. We expected to be able to do it this time."**

This was a relevant question because Matthew 10:1 reports that Jesus had given sent his disciples out to preach and had given them “**power over unclean spirits.**” Yet the disciples were unable to help this young man. Why?

Jesus replied that the reasons were complex. But the demon was unusually powerful and that their failure was linked to **unbelief.** (Matt. 17:30). It was not that the disciples had not believed that they cast this demon out; they had assumed that they could. After all they had done it before.

Jesus told them at in that situation they should have **prayed.** What they ought to have done when they ran into circumstances which contradicted their expectations, where they failed when they didn't expect to fail, where things didn't go the way they thought, was pray. When faced with a situation like that, the disciples should have prayed. Instead of defending themselves they should have prayed. They had a choice: **pride** or prayer, defensiveness or **dependence,** and they made the wrong choice.

Jesus was NOT saying that there was some kind of magical prayer that if prayed on the spot, could have done the job. Jesus implied that they were neglecting a lifestyle of prayer. The reason for **powerlessness** is prayerlessness. The disciples who had been left in the valley had faced the challenge of casting out a demon and had failed miserably. The fact that the disciples are defeated proves that they still had much to learn.