

MERCY  
REVEALED



# MERCY REVEALED

A Cross-Centered Look at Christ's Miracles

Gerald M. Bilkes



**Reformation Heritage Books**  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

*Mercy Revealed*

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**Reformation Heritage Books**

2965 Leonard St. NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0889 / Fax 616-285-3246

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

*Printed in the United States of America*

15 16 17 18 19 20/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bilkes, Gerald M.

Mercy revealed : a cross-centered look at Christ's miracles /  
Gerald M. Bilkes.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-60178-409-4 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Jesus Christ—Miracles—Biblical teaching. 2. Bible. Gospels—Criticism, interpretation, etc. I. Title.

BT366.3B55 2015

226.7'06—dc23

2015016013

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*For my children,*

**Lauren, Seth, Zach, Audrey, and Josh,**  
all of whom greet me daily as miracles of God.

*I pray that each of you will experience the  
greatest miracle of all—being drawn into fellowship  
with God, through Christ, the Son of God.*



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## Acknowledgments

After the publication of a book on the parables of Jesus, *Glory Veiled and Unveiled*, I was encouraged to write a sequel on the miracles of Jesus, which I started to do more years ago than I would care to admit. For many different reasons, the project stalled a number of times, and it is largely because of the persistent encouragement and loving prodding of Jay Collier of Reformation Heritage Books that this book crossed the finish line.

I also want to thank Annette Gysen from RHB for her invaluable editing and comments, which helped better the book immensely. Steve Renkema, David Woollin, Amy Zevenbergen, Linda den Hollander, and the other staff at RHB all deserve thanks for their contributions, along with Dr. Joel Beeke for agreeing to publish it. An initial draft of these chapters appeared in installments in *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* and *The Messenger*, and I am grateful to the respective editors, Dr. Joel Beeke and Rev. Cornelis Pronk, for permission to publish them in this format.

A special thanks goes to Michelle, who, besides being a constant help and stay for me and for our children, frequently

helps by editing my work—filling in the gaps, connecting the dots, and straightening out the logic.

Thanks also to Kate DeVries, my sister-in-law, for her edits, as well as to my father, Dr. Lawrence Bilkes, and brother, Rev. Lawrence J. Bilkes, for providing helpful comments on many of the chapters. Thanks also to my research assistants and others who have helped see this book through—Rev. Michael Borg, Kenneth Hutton, Ryan Hurd, and Marjoleine deBlois—all of whom worked readily and cheerfully for me. Any remaining errors are my own responsibility, though all of them have saved me from many more.

I want to acknowledge my colleagues in the Free Reformed Churches, with whom I am privileged to labor, as well as the Theological Education Committee of the FRC, under whose oversight I serve. I also want to thank my seminary colleagues, Dr. Michael Barrett, Dr. Joel Beeke, Rev. Mark Kelderman, Dr. David Murray, and Dr. William VanDoodewaard, who are a source of daily encouragement and inspiration to me. Finally, I wish to thank the Son of God, who alone does wondrous things.

## Introduction: Learning about Christ from His Miracles

*Luke 7:19-23*

*Jesus... said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.*

—LUKE 7:22

This is a study of the miracles of Christ as they are recorded by the gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke.<sup>1</sup> Christ's miracles are not the only ones recorded in Scripture. We are given detailed accounts of miracles in the Old Testament, especially in the accounts of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. The opening pages of the New Testament also record miracles such as the birth of John the Baptist and the conception of Jesus Christ. After Christ's ascension, His disciples performed many notable miracles. Miracles were not something that occurred only during biblical times. Christ still performs miracles both as He saves sinners and sustains His people every day. As He carries them, heals them, restores them, and delivers them from their fears, He is working out His perfect plan, filled as it is with countless miracles. However, the miracles Christ

performed Himself while He walked this earth are perhaps the most well known and beloved by Christians.

But I do not want us to study these miracles only because they are loved or well known. They are also valuable because of what they teach us about Christ. Peter made an important point about these miracles on the day of Pentecost: “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know” (Acts 2:22). The miracles magnify Christ’s glory, pointing to Him as one approved by God. If Christ has His Father’s approval, how can He not be worthy of ours?

### **Defining Miracles**

The miracles of Christ were special signs that He performed during His public ministry. He did things that others could not do—things that proved that God was with Him, as Nicodemus noted (John 3:2). These events ran counter to expected natural processes.

In a certain sense, everything God does is a miracle. For example, many miracles were involved in His creation of heaven and earth in six days. God’s upholding everything by His providence is a miracle. The sunshine and rain, the springtime and harvest, and many other natural phenomena point to the might and power of God, who works in ways we cannot trace (Eccl. 11:5). Yet, as we will see, the Bible speaks specifically of miracles and, in doing so, refers to events that distinguish themselves from normal and expected processes.

The Bible uses three main words for miracles. Each one emphasizes a certain aspect of the miraculous character of an

event. In many instances, only one of the three words is used in a narrative. But in Acts 2:22, as Peter describes Christ's miracles, all three of the words are in the same verse.

The first word used by Peter and in other passages is *dunamis*, or "powerful deed." This word stresses the might or power required for the performance of a miracle. For example, Christ used this word when He said, "If the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented" (Luke 10:13).

*Teras*, or "wonder," is the second word that is used. It emphasizes the response required by or expected from the miracle. A person witnessing or hearing about the event ought to be amazed. This word is used in John 4:48: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

Third is *semeion*, or "sign." In other words, the miracle serves as a signal or signpost, pointing the person who sees it or hears of it to something else. This word is used in John 20:30: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples."

## The Kinds of Miracles

Biblical scholars have attempted to categorize the miracles into groups. One common method classifies them according to who or what is involved, as follows:

- *Miracles involving human beings:* This is the most common kind of miracle in the Gospels. Christ cured people with diseases and even brought the dead back to life. Some were healed with a touch, others from a distance. In each case, it was

clear that Christ was the source of healing. Miracles involving demon-possessed people could be included as a subcategory within this group.

- *Miracles involving creation or nature*: The well-known miracles in which there is a calming of the sea, walking on water, or multiplying of loaves and fishes are included in this group. Something within the created order was being acted upon and became subservient to its Creator in a new and incredible way.

### **The Purposes of the Miracles**

Why did Christ perform miracles on earth? Luke 9:19–23 helps us answer this question. While in prison, John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus whether He was the promised Messiah, or if they had to wait for someone else. In answer to his question, Christ sent the disciples back to John with reports of the miracles He was performing. In other words, He was confirming that, because of His miracles, He was indeed the Messiah! This response is key in helping us understand why Christ performed miracles. We can identify the following four main purposes:

1. To announce the arrival of the kingdom of grace in Christ's coming, in accordance with prophecy (see, for example, Isa. 35:3–6)
2. To illustrate Christ's teaching of redemption by grace and the turning back of the consequences of the fall into sin

3. To foreshadow the benefits Christ would accomplish in His work of redemption on the cross
4. To show forth Christ's glory as the Son of God

As we study the miracles, we will see these purposes again and again.

### **Believing the Miracles**

In the past as well as in the present, some have denied that the miracles of the Bible actually took place. If time and space allowed, we could go on at length about some of the arguments people use against miracles and how they can be refuted. Simply put, a person who decides that Christ's miracles couldn't actually have taken place is forcing his or her own view of reality on the Scriptures. Since no one can prove that the miracles did not really happen, this viewpoint is not a statement of fact, but of faith or, rather, unbelief. Such a person is simply saying that he or she does not believe that Christ performed miracles. But once we have eyes to see all that He does in us and around us, instead of doubting Christ's ability, we will experience the joy of seeing countless blessings and miracles that He still performs in our lives. When we focus on His divine presence in our lives, not only will we increase our joy in the Lord but also we will expect more from Him.

### **The Christ of the Miracles**

Is it any wonder that Christ performed miracles when He is such an extraordinary person? He was both perfectly human

and perfectly divine. While on earth, He was unique from any other human being.

When we study the miracles, we should never lose sight of the glorious and magnificent Christ who performed them. If you have been brought from darkness to light, He has performed such a miracle in your heart. He has regenerated you, justified you, and reconciled you unto God. These things should astound us no less than the miracles He did when He was on earth.

We should also notice that it is not just divine *power* that shines through Christ's miracles. Divine *attributes* are on display as well—Christ's wisdom, omniscience, love, mercy, and long-suffering are apparent in many of His miracles. What a glimpse they provide of our Lord's character!

Ultimately, all the miracles should lead us to Calvary and the empty tomb, where we see the most miraculous event of all. On the cross and in the empty grave, we see how God brought life and immortality to light in the gospel through the death of a sinless Surety. And so, in each of our studies, we hope to travel the journey from the miracle itself to the cross and the empty tomb. Our focus should not be on the miracles themselves, but on the triune God who purposed and performed them and who applies their truth to the hearts of those who are spiritually blind, lame, leprous, and dead.

## Questions

1. Which of Christ's miracles is your favorite? Why do you think it has captured your imagination?
2. There are two extreme views regarding miracles. Some people don't believe in them, while other people want to see them everywhere and believe that they happen today just as they did in the Bible. Think about an appropriate response for both extremes. How can you help people who find the miracles of the Bible difficult to believe or accept?
3. Take another look at the four purposes of the miracles that were given in this chapter. What do they say about God's divinity? What do the miracles in the Bible mean to you personally?
4. Does Satan perform miracles (2 Thess. 2:9)? If so, how are they different from Christ's miracles?
5. Do you see miracles happen in your life? If so, can you name them?