The Prophecies of Jesus

Isaiah 35:5-6a

Lesson 7

1. Hello. My name is Ken Samuel, and this is the seventh part of an eleven-part series on the prophecies of Jesus that was originally created by Stephen Katz. Today, we are going to talk about miracles. <click>
2. Isaiah 35, verses 5 and 6, says, “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.” So, Isaiah is prophesying a time when somebody will heal blind, deaf, lame, and mute people. Of course, the missionaries claim that he is referring to Jesus Christ. <click>
3. Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus performed the miracles listed in Isaiah 35. <click> “Great crowds came to Jesus, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them.” <click> “‘The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.’” So, Jesus healed blind, deaf, lame, and mute people, among all of his other miracles. <click> And Jesus’ miracles, say the missionaries, tell us that Jesus was the Messiah. John said as much: “Jesus performed many other 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 Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” So, John said that the purpose of the miracles was to convince you that Jesus was the Messiah. <click>
4. Well, as usual, the anti-missionaries aren’t impressed. They note that many people performed miracles. Here are some examples. <click> “Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake.” Notice that Pharaoh’s men could perform miracles, even though they weren’t on God’s side. <click> “Samson got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.” Now, even though Samson was a big dude, I can’t imagine he was taller than the doors of the city gates. So, if he was holding the top of a door on his shoulder, then the bottom of the door must have been dragging on the ground. He wasn’t actually supporting the entire weight of the doors. I’m not impressed. (That’s a joke.) <click> “Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man’s body into Elisha’s tomb. When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.” Now, this is really remarkable. Elisha resurrected a man when he, Elisha, was already dead! <click>
5. One reason that God enables people to perform miracles is to test people. <click> “If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, ‘Let us follow other gods’ (gods you have not known) ‘and let us worship them,’ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.” God is *testing* you. <click> “‘But a prophet who presumes to speak in God’s name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.’ You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.” So, you see, God enabled Jesus to perform miracles to see if he could fool you into following Jesus. And you missionaries failed the test. <click>
6. Miracles don’t prove a person is the Messiah or a prophet. They don’t even prove that a person is actually one of God’s servants. Maimonides, a famous rabbi in the 12th century AD, said, “The Jews did not believe in Moses, our teacher, because of the miracles he performed. Whenever anyone’s belief is based on seeing miracles, he has lingering doubts, because it is possible the miracles were performed through magic or sorcery. All of the miracles performed by Moses in the desert were because they were necessary, and not as proof of his prophecy.” In other words, God never intended for Moses’ miracles to convince people that he was speaking for God. That wasn’t the point. He was performing miracles for other purposes, such as escaping from Egyptians or feeding people. <click>
7. And Jesus himself admitted that miracles don’t prove anything. <click> He said, “‘For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.’” <click> Penina Taylor, an anti-missionary, explained this. “It may also be interesting to note that while most missionaries will cite Jesus’ performance of miracles as proof that he is the messiah, the New Testament itself... indicates that there could be false messiahs who present miracles in order to trick God’s people, but they are false. This being the case, miracles prove nothing, and the fact that the New Testament claims that Jesus did miracles prove nothing concerning Jesus’ role as messiah or his alleged divinity.” Again, miracles prove nothing, <click>
8. So, just because you perform miracles, that doesn’t mean you’re the Messiah. And, conversely, just because you’re the Messiah, that doesn’t mean you perform miracles. The Bible never said that the Messiah would perform miracles. And, if you look at the context preceding this lesson’s key verses, you’ll see that it isn’t the Messiah who performs those miracles. <click> It’s God. “‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.’ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.” <click> Returning to Maimonides, the famous twelfth-century rabbi, “One should not presume that the Messianic King must work miracles and wonders, bring about new creations within the world, resurrect the dead, or perform other similar deeds. This is definitely not true.” <click> Maimonides also wrote, “The identity of the Messiah will not be determined by miracles and wonders, but by his ability to lead the Jewish People to a more complete observance of the law and good works. He will then improve the entire world, motivating the people of every nation to serve God together.” <click> And, going back to Penina Taylor, she said, “The question which must be asked is, ‘Does the Jewish Bible tell us that we be able to recognize the messiah because he will perform miracles?’ Not only is there no evidence anywhere in the Jewish bible to support the claim that the messiah will perform miracles, we have very concrete examples in the Old Testament of people performing miracles who were considered wicked.” For example, Pharaoh’s wise men and sorcerers. <click>
9. Okay, let’s see what the missionaries’ have to say about all that. First, to rebut the accusation that people who believe in Jesus failed a test, let’s take another look at the two passages the anti-missionaries presented. <click> “If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, ‘Let us follow other gods’ (gods you have not known) ‘and let us worship them,’ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Well, this says that the test is to see if the so-called prophet leads you to follow false gods. <click> But Jesus never did that, so this warning doesn’t apply to him. <click> And the other passage says, “‘But a prophet who presumes to speak in God’s name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.’ You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.” <click> So, since none of Jesus’ prophesies failed to come true, as we saw in our last lesson, this test is also irrelevant in his case. <click>
10. Now, the anti-missionaries make a good point when they say that miracles don’t prove a man is the Messiah or a prophet or even a servant of the one true God. <click> Miracles aren’t *proof*, but we can view them as evidence. <click> John wrote, “Jesus performed many other 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 Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The reason John wrote down Jesus’ miracles is to give you *reason* to believe in him, not *proof*. <click>
11. And, as for the anti-missionaries’ argument that the Bible never claimed the Messiah would perform miracles, it’s true that the Bible never said that, <click> but the Dead Sea scrolls did. <click> “The heavens and the earth will listen to His Messiah, … He who… restores sight to the blind, straightens the bent… And the Lord... will heal the wounded, and revive the dead.” So, there’s a passage with the word, “Messiah,” and a few miracles referenced, written thousands of years ago. <click>
12. Okay, as usual, you have the right to decide who to believe, the missionaries or the anti-missionaries.