Messianic Miracles of Jesus

Signs That Identified the Messiah

A 30-Minute Teaching Study

David V. Lott, Ph.D.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This lesson examines the biblical and historical background surrounding miracles associated with messianic expectation and considers how the Gospel writers use the works of Jesus to reveal His identity, authority, and the arrival of God's kingdom.

Teaching Aim

By the end of the study, participants should be able to distinguish between what Scripture explicitly says about Jesus' miracles and later claims about a fixed category of "Messianic Miracles," while recognizing how the Gospels present His works as signs of His messianic identity and kingdom authority.

Opening Question

When Jesus healed the sick, cleansed lepers, opened blind eyes, expelled demons, and raised the dead, what were His contemporaries supposed to conclude from those works?

Teacher emphasis: *The central issue is not whether miracles occurred elsewhere in Israel's history. Moses, Elijah, and Elisha were also associated with extraordinary works. The question is what Jesus' particular works reveal about who He is.*

1. Miracles in Israel's Biblical Story

Miracles were already part of Israel's sacred memory. The Exodus displayed God's power through Moses. Elijah and Elisha performed healings, multiplied food, and even restored the dead to life. Therefore, a miracle by itself did not automatically prove that its human agent was the Messiah.

The prophetic Scriptures, however, also looked forward to a future work of God characterized by restoration. Isaiah envisioned blind eyes opened, deaf ears unstopped, the lame leaping, and the mute shouting for joy (Isaiah 35:5–6). Isaiah also described God's Servant as one appointed to open blind eyes and release captives (Isaiah 42:6–7), while Isaiah 61:1–2 announced good news, liberty, and divine favor.

These passages create a biblical atmosphere in which acts of healing and restoration can function as more than displays of power. They can become signs that God's promised saving reign is arriving.

2. Jesus Points to His Works

When John the Baptist sent messengers asking, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” Jesus did not answer with a simple title. He directed John's attention to what was happening: the blind received sight, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, and the poor received good news (Matthew 11:2–6).

The answer deliberately echoes the restoration language of Isaiah. Jesus' works are therefore not random wonders. They are evidence that the realities anticipated by Israel's prophets are breaking into history.

Discussion: *Why might Jesus answer John's question by pointing to His works rather than simply saying, “Yes, I am the Messiah”?*

3. The Miracles and the Question of Messianic Expectation

Some modern Christian teaching groups several miracles under the label “Messianic Miracles,” often including cleansing a Jewish leper, casting out a demon from a mute person, healing someone born blind, and raising a person after an extended period in the tomb. These teachings argue that such works were regarded as uniquely messianic.

The biblical texts clearly show that these miracles carried major theological significance. What requires greater caution is the stronger historical claim that first-century Judaism possessed a universally recognized, fixed list of miracles that only Messiah could perform. The surviving evidence does not justify treating that formulation as an established consensus across Judaism.

The better approach is to examine each Gospel narrative on its own terms while asking how the work relates to Israel's Scriptures, Jewish expectations, the reaction of witnesses and leaders, and the claims being made about Jesus.

4. Cleansing the Leper

In Matthew 8:1–4, a leper approaches Jesus and is cleansed. Jesus then instructs him to show himself to the priest and present the offering commanded by Moses. The miracle therefore intersects directly with the Torah's procedures for confirming cleansing.

The episode displays both compassion and authority. Jesus does not merely pronounce the man ritually acceptable; the disease itself is removed. The command to go to the priest also places the event within Israel's covenantal and priestly world.

Key point: *Avoid claiming more than the text establishes. Emphasize Jesus' authority, the Mosaic context, and the public significance of priestly verification.*

5. The Mute Demoniac and the Escalating Conflict

Matthew 9:27–34 records the healing of blind men followed by the deliverance of a mute demoniac. The crowds marvel, but the Pharisees attribute Jesus' power to the ruler of demons. Matthew 12:22–24 presents a similar confrontation when a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute is healed.

The importance of these episodes lies partly in the response they provoke. The works force observers to ask about Jesus' identity. The crowd raises the Davidic question, while opponents must account for power they cannot simply ignore.

Jesus later interprets His exorcisms in kingdom terms: if He casts out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon them (Matthew 12:28). The miracle is therefore a sign of divine invasion into the realm of spiritual bondage.

6. The Man Born Blind

John 9 devotes an entire chapter to the healing of a man blind from birth. The physical miracle becomes the setting for a deeper exploration of spiritual sight and blindness. The healed man progressively recognizes more about Jesus while those investigating the miracle become increasingly resistant.

The narrative culminates not merely in restored eyesight but in recognition and worship. John's Gospel repeatedly calls Jesus' miracles "signs" because they point beyond themselves. The opening of blind eyes becomes both an act of mercy and a revelation of identity.

Connection: *This passage naturally connects with Isaiah's restoration imagery and with the broader biblical theology of seeing and spiritual perception.*

7. Ten Lepers and the Reach of Mercy

Luke 17:11–19 recounts Jesus' cleansing of ten lepers. All ten are healed as they go to show themselves to the priests, but only one returns to give thanks—and he is a Samaritan.

The episode again places cleansing within the priestly framework while expanding the theological horizon. Divine mercy crosses expected social and ethnic boundaries. Jesus' works reveal not merely power over disease but the character and reach of God's saving activity.

8. What the Signs Reveal

Taken together, the Gospel miracles reveal several overlapping realities. Jesus acts with extraordinary authority over disease, disability, demons, nature, ritual impurity, and death. His works echo prophetic descriptions of restoration. They provoke questions about His identity. They accompany His proclamation of the kingdom. And they often expose the spiritual condition of those who witness them.

The signs therefore should not be reduced either to spectacular proofs or merely to compassionate acts. They are both. They reveal the mercy of God while pointing toward the identity and mission of the One through whom God's kingdom is arriving.

Key Biblical Texts

Text	Teaching Emphasis
Isaiah 35:5–6	Restoration imagery: blind eyes opened, deaf ears unstopped, the lame restored.
Isaiah 42:6–7	The Servant's mission includes opening blind eyes and releasing captives.
Isaiah 61:1–2	Good news, liberty, and the announcement of divine favor.
Matthew 8:1–4	Jesus cleanses a leper and sends him for priestly verification.
Matthew 9:27–34	Blind men receive sight and a mute demoniac is delivered.

Matthew 11:2–6	Jesus answers John's messianic question by pointing to His works.
Matthew 12:22–24	A dramatic healing produces a Davidic question and Pharisaic opposition.
John 9:1–41	Healing of the man born blind becomes a sign concerning spiritual sight.
Luke 17:11–19	Ten lepers are cleansed; a Samaritan returns in gratitude.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it inadequate to argue that Jesus is Messiah simply because He performed miracles?

2. How does Matthew 11:2–6 connect Jesus' works with the prophetic expectations of Isaiah?

3. What do the reactions to Jesus' miracles reveal about the importance of interpretation and belief?

4. Why should we distinguish between the biblical significance of these miracles and later claims about a fixed list of uniquely “Messianic Miracles”?

5. What do Jesus' signs reveal about the character of the kingdom of God?

Conclusion

Jesus' miracles are not isolated displays of supernatural ability. Within the Gospel narratives they belong to the announcement that God's promised reign is breaking into the world. Blind eyes open. Lepers are cleansed. Demons are expelled. The oppressed are restored. These works echo Israel's prophetic hope and force the question the Gospels continually place before the reader: Who is this?

The strongest case does not depend upon claiming that first-century Judaism maintained a universally accepted checklist of miracles reserved exclusively for Messiah. It rests on the cumulative Gospel presentation. Jesus' words, works, authority, fulfillment of Scripture, death, and resurrection converge upon the New Testament's confession that He is the Christ.

30-Minute Teaching Plan

Time	Focus
0–3 minutes	Opening question and purpose
3–8 minutes	Miracles in Israel's story and Isaiah's restoration promises
8–13 minutes	Matthew 11: Jesus points John to the works
13–23 minutes	Selected miracle narratives and their significance
23–27 minutes	Historical caution: Scripture versus later “Messianic Miracles” formulations
27–30 minutes	Discussion, synthesis, and conclusion

Scripture references are presented for teaching and study. Use the NASB77 text when quoting passages in class.