

Jesus' Wonderful Works



SABBATH—APRIL 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 4:23–25; Matthew 8:25–27; Matthew 11:2–6; Matthew 12:22, 23; Acts 3:19–21.

MEMORY VERSE: “When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he felt deep concern for them. They were beaten down and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36, NIV).

EVEN THE SHORTEST READING OF THE LIFE OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS¹ shows an interesting fact: Jesus' birth was wonderful. But very little is said about His childhood and early years. This lack of information has led to many wild guesses about what Christ did during all those lost years. But nothing comes close to what Ellen G. White wrote in *The Desire of Ages* (“As a Child”).

Instead, the Bible focuses on Jesus' adult life, mostly about the three and a half years of His ministry. What a three and a half years they were!

The world has experienced nothing like it. Jesus always worked for others without any reward for Himself. His works are presented as proof of the birth of the kingdom of God. The moment the Sermon on the Mount ended, the scene changed quickly. Jesus became involved in caring for the needs of the people (read Matthew 8; 9). *For Jesus it was not just words.* He had the works to more than back up the words.

The kingdom of God had arrived, and Jesus was there to start it rolling.

1. Gospels—the first four books of the New Testament tell the story of Jesus' life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

SUNDAY—APRIL 27**WHAT KIND OF MAN IS JESUS?
(Matthew 8:25–27)**

Read Matthew 8:1–4. What important reasons does Matthew 8:1–4 give us about Jesus' coming into the world?

Matthew tells us that the healing of the leper takes place as soon as Jesus comes down from the mountain. Right after delivering the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has to deal with human² need in the valley. And the first challenge Jesus faces is leprosy. Leprosy is a symbol of our sinful human condition (the way things are right now). Jesus touches the leper, and the leprosy is gone! Such is the power of our Lord.



Jesus touches the leper, and the leprosy goes away!

In the rest of Matthew 8 and in chapter 9, Matthew pictures Jesus' *power over nature*; He calms the storm (Matthew 8:23–27). He has *power over demons*; He frees the demoniacs³ (verses 28–33). He has *power "over sickness, disease, and infirmity* [weakness, illness]"; He heals the paralytic (a person who cannot move parts of his or her body) and the woman with a hemorrhage (bleeding problem) (verses 1–9, 20–22). He has *power over death*; He brings Jairus's daughter back to life (verses 18, 19, 23–26). Jesus also has power over the storms of our lives, over the demons in our lives, and over the difficulties that bother us.

What lessons can we learn from Matthew 8:23–27?

In fables and tales of the past, water was recognized as an enemy that God overcomes. "To Israel, the rushing, rough waters symbolized [meant] the powers that are opposed to God's rule."—Adapted from *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), volume R–Z, page 809. We should be as surprised as Jesus' disciples when they said: "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:27, NIV). In a way, their surprise helps us remember the first chapter of Isaiah. There God calls heaven and earth to witness the rebellious nature of His

2. human—of, or concerning, men, women, or children.

3. demoniacs—persons who have an evil spirit or spirits living inside them.

people. Of all creation, God's people are the only ones who are disloyal to Him. So here we may ask if we are the only creatures (people) to rebel against Jesus. The winds and the waves obey Him. What about us?

MONDAY—APRIL 28

THE WONDER OF IT ALL (Matthew 9:27–34)

It is not often that a person pays attention to the paragraph headings in those modern versions of the Bible that have them. But one in Matthew 9 (NIV) comes close to a complete (full) description of the wonder of Jesus' works of healing, mercy, and power. "A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman," it says. The words picture the challenge that the Savior always had during His time with us. It is not the kind of challenge that a person could solve by a trick. But Jesus faced it all. That day, the dead girl came back to life. And the bleeding woman got a new start after 12 years of suffering.

Think about the following verses. Do not write anything. Just sit back and wonder about how wonderful it is. Wonder about the wonderful Savior we have (Matthew 9:27–34; Matthew 12:22, 23; Matthew 14:25–31, 34–36; Matthew 15:29–31; Matthew 20:29–34; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 6:19).

To understand the full power of these verses, a person must read them slowly. He or she needs to

recapture the historical background of the verses. For example, Matthew 12:22, 23 explains about the man who is brought to Jesus. The man is blind and cannot speak. Close your eyes and put a finger over your lips for a while. Try to imagine the condition of that poor man. In that condition he does not know what is around him, and he cannot ask. But the man meets Jesus, and leaves Him with eyes wide open and with his tongue full of praise!

Matthew 14:34–36 and Luke 6:19 tell us that people pushed forward to touch the Savior, "because power was coming from him and healing them all" (Luke 6:19, NIV).

Jesus promised that His followers will do greater things than He did. What does that mean? Why are we not experiencing such wonders of healing today? Or are we experiencing it in some places? How is the church's healing ministry (work) today the same as the example that Jesus set? How can you help continue Jesus' healing ministry?

TUESDAY—APRIL 29

THE REASON BEHIND IT (Matthew 4:23–25)

Back in the 1980s, detectives planned a surprise operation on certain American televangelists. These preachers would invite people to send in their personal prayer requests to the broadcast. These preachers would ask that the people enclose a gift "to keep

the program on the air.” The investigators wanted to know what happened to those prayer gifts. What they discovered shocked them. Staffers for the televangelists would go to the post office and collect the letters sent in by listeners. They would open them on the spot, take out the donations, and then dump the letters in the post office trash bins.

In Matthew 4:23–25, we read of Jesus traveling throughout the entire area of Galilee. Huge crowds were following Him from all across the region. And when Matthew returns to that same theme in chapter 9, he adds a very important thought that forever separates Jesus from these false TV evangelists.

How does Matthew 9:35, 36 describe the motive (reason) for Jesus' ministry?

The word *compassion* (mercy) comes from a Greek word *splagchnon* that means “the inward parts” or



Compassion (mercy and love) for others comes from the heart.

“the bowels.” People of long ago believed that the bowels were the basis of the emotions. Compassion goes beyond sympathy which comes from the mind. Compassion comes from the inside, from the heart and even the inner being of a person.

That is what Jesus had. Jesus would never think of grabbing people's money and dumping their letters into post office garbage bins. Again and again in the Gospels, Jesus' compassion describes His attitude (feeling) toward the people. A leper begs Him: “‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’” Jesus is “filled with compassion.” Then He reaches out to the leper: “‘I am willing. . . . Be clean!’” (Mark 1:40, 41, NIV; read also Matthew 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52.)

Imagine someone doing all this without thinking about personal gain. He does not bother to think that what he is doing will be *picked up by the press*. Then you are thinking about Jesus. The single reason that moved Him was love. It was love from the inside of Him. The Gospels call it *compassion*. How does compassion like this encourage your feelings and actions toward others?

WEDNESDAY—APRIL 30

**SIGN OF A NEW DAY
(Matthew 11:2–6)**

From his prison cell, John the Baptist sent an important message to

Jesus: “ ‘Are you the one who was supposed to come? Or should we look for someone else?’ ” (Matthew 11:3, NIV). For the reader of the Gospels, it is a surprising and unexpected question. Was not this the same John who so boldly announced the Messiahship of Jesus at the Jordan (John 1:29–36)? And why would John raise the question right after he had “heard in prison what Christ was doing” (Matthew 11:2, NIV)? The important point for our study here is Jesus’ answer: “ ‘Go back to John. Report to him what you hear and see. Blind people receive sight. Disabled people walk. Those who have skin diseases are healed. Deaf people hear. Those who are dead are raised to life. And the good news is preached to those who are poor’ ” (verses 4, 5, NIV).

Jesus’ secret message to John was that His ministry was the sign of a new day. The Messiah had really arrived! Surely in the back of Jesus’ mind as He spoke were the wonderful prophecies⁴ in the book of Isaiah about Jesus as the Messiah.

How do Isaiah 29:18, 19; Isaiah 35:5, 6; and Isaiah 61:1–3 discuss Jesus’ ministry? Why do you think John and others were so slow to accept Jesus as the Messiah?

Matthew explains very clearly the idea that Old Testament prophecies about Jesus as the Messiah (Chosen

One) were fulfilled. He further supports this idea by writing: “He [Jesus] did it to make what the prophet Isaiah had said come true. He had said, ‘He suffered the things we should have suffered. He took on himself the sicknesses that should have been ours’ ” (Matthew 8:17, NIV; quoting Isaiah 53:4). We find this same idea in the description of Jesus’ ministry in Matthew 9:35, 36.



The people who came to Jesus were like sheep who had no shepherd to keep them safe.

Looking back, we are surprised to see how John and others could have been so slow to accept who Jesus was. What about us today? How might we be just as slow to accept clear truths? More important, how can we change?

THURSDAY—MAY 1

SIGN OF THE FINAL RESTORATION⁵ (Acts 3:19–21)

In a wonderful way Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was

4. prophecies—messages given about what will happen in the future.

5. restoration—where everything is made new again. We are looking forward to the earth made new again.

blind and could not speak. This should bring praise from the Pharisees.⁶ But they blamed Jesus instead. They said, “ ‘This fellow [Jesus] drives out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons’ ” (Matthew 12:24, NIV). So Jesus was forced to explain the meaning of what was happening: “ ‘But suppose I drive out demons by the Spirit of God. Then God’s kingdom has come to you’ ” (verse 28, NIV).

Jesus’ argument is important. In the teaching of the Gospels, the kingdom of God is real, both in the present and in the future. (Read Matthew 26:29; Luke 23:42; John 18:36.)

What this means is that the works of Christ also look forward to the time the earth is made new again. Jesus used the prophecy of Isaiah about Himself. He was reading the scrolls⁷ in the synagogue (church) at Nazareth (Luke 4:18, 19). He was saying much more than would happen within the short three and a half years of His own earthly ministry. The wording, “the year of the Lord’s favor,” reminds us of the custom from the past called the jubilee.⁸ This was an announcement of the beginning of the kingdom of God. It begins with the coming of the Messiah and reaches all the way down to the final end. Then all prisoners will have been set free. All blind people will regain their sight. All suffering will be removed. And joy will fill the whole universe.

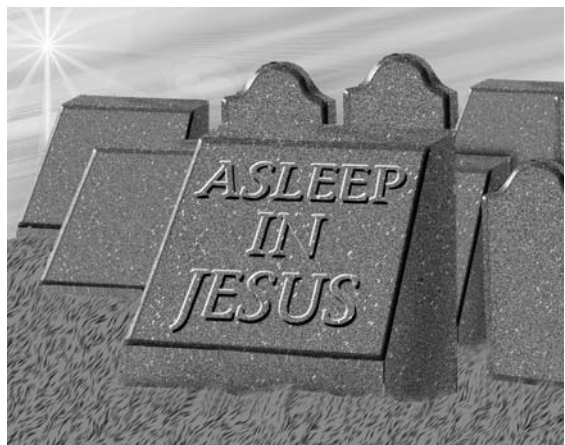
6. Pharisees—a religious group of Jesus’ day who believed a person must keep God’s law to be saved.

7. scrolls—long pieces of paper rolled up. Scrolls were used instead of books in Bible times.

8. jubilee—every fiftieth year the Jews celebrated a special year called the year of jubilee. During this time, there was no planting of crops, and all debts and offenses (charges and insults) were forgiven. Homes and land were returned to original owners, and so forth.

What do the following verses teach about the relationship between Jesus’ ministry and the final restoration? (Mark 5:35–42; Luke 7:11–15; John 11:38–44; Acts 3:19–21).

The most powerful sign of the rule of sin is death. And the return to life of people by Jesus during His ministry pointed forward to that final day. On that day, death will be no more. “ ‘I am the Living One,’ ” says the resurrected Christ in John’s vision in Revelation. “ ‘I am the Living One. I was dead. But look! I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys to Death and Hell’ ” (Revelation 1:18, NIV). People whom Jesus returned to life during His ministry all died again. But Jesus looked forward to that day of glory. On that day, “The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised to live forever” (1 Corinthians 15:52, NIV).



Jesus’ return to life is a sign of His power over death.

How important is the hope of the resurrection?⁹ What do we have without it? What reasons do you have for trusting in God's promise to one day destroy death forever?

FRIDAY—MAY 2

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Examine the statement below. How closely is it connected with this week's lesson? Do you sense possible problems? Or does it make the same general point in a different way? Here is the statement: "The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus' miracles. But we would be wrong to focus on them. For one thing, Jesus did not focus on them. Jesus did almost all of them quietly, apart from the crowd, and as examples of the power of faith. We get a better understanding of Jesus' activities [works] if we do as Peter did. In speaking to a group, Peter found it necessary to summarize Jesus' life by saying, '*He went about doing good.*' Jesus moved easily among common people and social misfits. He healed them and counseled them. He went about doing good. He just focused on working for the good of the people. He did it in such a way that people who were with him would think that if God in human form were to do this good, this is how He would behave."

—Adapted from Huston Smith, *The Illustrated World's Religions*, page 210.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Ellen G. White said that "the great works of the gospel¹⁰ will be as many as these on the opening day when God showed His power."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, page 611. She spoke about powerful, worldwide evangelism¹¹ as the time of the end nears. She also said that "miracles will be done. The sick will be healed. Signs and wonders will follow the believers."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, page 612. How do you see this prophecy coming true? What part do you think you have in it? What part does your local church have in all this? What things can we do to prepare for this time?
- ❷ Suppose you knew someone who did many of the wonderful miracles that Jesus did. How should you treat (accept) this person?
- ❸ Bring to class your answer to Monday's question about modern miracles. Be ready to discuss your answers and the reasons for them.

9. resurrection—return to life.

10. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins.

11. evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.