

HEBREWS—HANDOUT 7

2:1-4

v. 1— Διὰ τοῦτο δεῖ περισσότερως προσέχειν ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἀκουσθεῖσιν, μήποτε παραρυῶμεν

v. 2— εἰ γὰρ ὁ δι' ἀγγέλων λαληθεὶς λόγος ἐγένετο βέβαιος καὶ πᾶσα παράβασις καὶ παρακοή ἔλαβεν ἔνδικον μισθαποδοσίαν

v. 18— ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέποιθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθεὶς, δύναται τοῖς πειραζομένοις βοηθῆσαι

?Macrostructure:

2:1-4 — “escape”

12:25-29 — “escape”

Word Patterns

v. 1 _____

v. 3 _____

v. 2 _____

v. 3 _____

v. 1 — Shift from _____ to _____

Contrast:

v. 2 — *a minore ad maius* (Latin)
qal wahomer (Hebrew)
Grammar: “if” . . . “_____”

v. 3 — Rhetorical question:
Capsule summary of the NT message:

Parallel with 12:25:

v. 4 — miraculous gifts/signs as _____
eschatological _____ → eschatological _____
?more “from the lesser to the greater”:

Miraculous attestation with revelation accompanied by angels

Miraculous attestation with revelation accompanied by the Son

Triune manifestation: Father, Son and Holy Spirit accompanying the
fullest attested revelation

UNDERSTANDING THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

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During the last two-hundred years, Synoptic (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and Johannine miracles have been apologetic tools in the hands of orthodox controversialists. These “defenders of the faith” have proceeded as follows: (1) since God alone could empower a person with miraculous gifts, miracles identify the agent as a messenger of God (the classic proof-text is John 3:2; cf. 1 Kings 17:24; Ex. 8:19); (2) when the message is “thus saith the Lord”, the miracle authenticates the claim to be a channel of supernatural revelation; (3) therefore, the miracles are an endorsement of the inerrancy of Scripture. The ensuing argument is not to be construed as a rejection of the validity of this traditional apologetic approach or its conclusions. Supernatural revelation is accompanied by supernatural attestation (cf. Heb. 2:3, 4). The following argument suggests, however, that the strictly apologetic aspect does not *exhaust* the significance of the gospel miracles. Complementary aspects are equally significant. And yet, it must be admitted that the tendency of the exclusively apologetic emphasis is to isolate the gospel miracles from their context in the history of redemption. That is, the gospel miracles are intimately related to what has preceded them (retrospective aspect) and what will follow them (prospective aspect) in the history of salvation (*historia salutis*). To say this is to suggest that the gospel miracles are best understood in a biblical-theological or redemptive-historical framework. They exist in a vital relationship with the past, the present, and the future activity of God on behalf of his people.

The apostle John gives us a clue to this biblical-theological framework in his Greek vocabulary. His most common name for the miracles of Jesus is *semeion*; rendered “signs” by the NASB (cf. 2:11; 3:2; 6:26; 7:31; 11:47, etc.). The miracles of Jesus are signs (cf. our related English word “semaphore”; *dynamis* is the predominant Synoptic term emphasizing the explosive power present in Christ; cf. our related English word “dynamite”). Of what then are Christ’s miracles signs? A series of illustrations from modern life will help answer this question. Our advertising industry uses signs in order to attract the consumer’s attention to the featured product. The billboard sign identifies a product so that we may be attracted to it. Second, we know that the object advertised on the billboard represents or symbolizes a product which is available now. For example, every billboard automobile is a testimony to the present availability of the real thing in a dealer’s showroom. Finally, our highway departments use signs to point the way ahead; they tell us what lies down the road in the future. Signs function in three significant aspects for us: attraction and identification; presence and availability; futurity and anticipation.

These modern illustrations help unfold the biblical-theological framework we are attempting to demonstrate. The miracles of Jesus are signs—signs attracting attention to Jesus as the Lord. Christ’s signs identify him as Master (Latin, *Dominus*) of the universe. Underscoring Christ’s claim to be “very God”, John significantly uses the theophanic name (the “I AM” name, cf. Ex. 3:14) in connection with Jesus’ signs: “*I am* the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48); “*I am* the light of the world” (John 9:5); “*I am* the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). Jesus is the Lord of Creation; he is God the Lord

(John 20:28): his miracles are credentials attesting that claim; and so the signs as attention-getting devices constitute the apologetic aspect of the gospel miracles. Second, the miracles of Jesus are signs signifying the availability or presence of the thing desired. The desire of the Old Testament prophets was for the new order which would dawn with the coming of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 42:9; 43:18, 19; 48:6). The miracles of Christ are signs that the new order has arrived and is presently available in him (cf. Mat. 13:17). Jesus is the Lord of the New Creation and all the gifts associated with the messianic era are available *now* in him. The signs represent the presence of the new era (Mat. 11:1-6); this is the messianic aspect of the miracles. Finally, the miracles of Jesus are signs of what lies ahead—in the future for the people of God. The provisional nature of the messianic gifts will be consummated in the kingdom of Heaven. The miracles are signs that Jesus is the Lord of Glory; this is the eschatological aspect of the miracles.

Let us proceed to practical applications of this threefold biblical-theological framework (Apologetic—Lord of Creation; Messianic—Lord of the New Creation; Eschatological—Lord of Glory) to the four categories of gospel miracles (nature, healing, exorcism, resurrection).

NATURE MIRACLES

Jesus stills the storm (Mat. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25); walks on the sea (Mat. 14:22, 23; Mark 6:45-51; John 6:15-21); changes water into wine (John 2:1-11); multiplies the loaves and the fishes (Mat. 14:15-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13) as a sign that he is the Lord of Creation. Attention is directed to the fact that he is God with almighty power over the created elements. Wind and wave obey their Master (cf. Pss. 65:7; 89:8, 9; 107:29); meat and drink are altered by his will. Yet, there is more. The nature miracles are signs of the dawning of the new creation. In this Man, dominion over the fallen creation is restored. Raging disorder and wild chaos, lack of abundance and failure of supply yield to harmonious peace and plenty. Jesus gives a sign that in him the old creation is provisionally delivered from the curse. Christ is the bringer of the messianic era. That for which the prophets yearned is available now. In an inaugural manner, Christ signifies that the creation is no longer subject to the curse; the prophetic vision of a creation restored to its paradisaical state is fulfilled (note the abundance of the best wine at Cana—between 120 and 180 gallons—and Isa. 25:6; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13, 14; Jer. 31:12; bread for five thousand with baskets left over—Isa. 65:13; and the prophetic hope of paradise regained with its fruitfulness and peace—Isa. 11:1-9; 51:3; 65:25; Hos. 2:18; Zech. 8:12). Finally, the nature miracles are eschatological signs of a truly new heaven and new earth. There will be no more curse, chaos, disorder or lack of supply (cf. Rev. 21:1; 22:3; note Rev. 19:7-9 in connection with the wedding feast at Cana); the entire created order will find its ultimate rest in the Lord of Glory.

HEALING MIRACLES

The healing miracles attract attention to who Jesus is. The crowds are amazed at this One in their midst who heals their diseases and binds up their wounds (Mat. 4:24, 25). Surely,

the Great Physician is Lord of Creation for he is the master of human sickness (cf. Ps. 103:3, Jesus does what God does). Healing miracles are also signs of the presence of the Messianic era (cf. Luke 4:17-21; 7:19-23). The prophets had anticipated the new day of the Messianic age when the blind would see, the deaf would hear, the lame would run and the dumb would sing (Isa. 35:5, 6 with Mat. 11:4, 5; Isa. 61:1; 29:18; 42:7, 16, 18; Jer. 31:8). With the coming of the new order, the power of sickness would be *provisionally* broken (Jesus does not heal *all* sickness). Jesus gives a sign that the new day has dawned (Mat. 4:17, 23; 9:35; 10:7, 8; Luke 9:1, 2). As healer of men's bodies, he supplies their needs as Lord of the New Creation; the curse of the fall is removed in him. But in the eschatological state, there will be no more sickness or pain (Rev. 21:4). As we await the consummation, the healing miracles are signs that Jesus is the Lord of Glory.

EXORCISM

When Jesus casts out demons, he displays his power over the creation. As Lord, even the fallen angels are subject to his authority. The devils know who he is (Mat. 8:29)! And the apologetic aspect of his exorcisms should be apparent to other eye-witnesses (Mark 3:22-26). Exorcism is also a sign of the Messianic era. From the time of the Fall and the *protevangelium* ("first gospel", Gen. 3:15), believers had longed for the victory over the adversary. The casting of Satan out of his dominion; the binding of the serpent; the liberation of the captives: all this was the object of the prophetic hope (cf. Isa. 61:1-3; 42:7). Jesus sets the prisoners of Satan free; it is a sign of the presence of the Messianic kingdom (Luke 11:15-22; cf. Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). Jesus is the bringer of a New Creation; victims of the fallen creation are emancipated in him. And what of the kingdom of heaven? Is Satan present there? No, the enemy has been cast out; the rebel is in chains (cf. Rev. 12:7-12; 20:1-6). He will never assault the gates of the city of God for Jesus has given a sign that he is the Lord of Glory.

RAISING THE DEAD

After he had been in the tomb four days, Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave. It was a sign of his credentials and an endorsement of his claim—"I am the resurrection and the life." The Lord of Creation—life and death—is also the Lord of the New Creation. Elijah and Elisha had raised the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:21-37) and Isaiah saw the day when the dead would live (Isa. 26:19; cf. 25:8). The Messianic gifts would include life for the dead (cf. Ezek. 37:1-10). Jesus gives a sign that he is able to supply that need now. A new creation is present and available in him; the curse of death is lifted from the fallen creation. And in the new Jerusalem—the city of God—there will be no more death, but everlasting resurrection-life (Rev. 20:14; 21:4).

This biblical-theological pattern (apologetic, messianic, eschatological) may be applied to all the miracles—Synoptic and Johannine—with the same results. What emerges are events which pulsate with redemptive significance—attractively, retrospectively, provisionally, prospectively. May the record of these events truly authenticate the Son of God as Lord—Lord of Creation; Lord of the New Creation; Lord of Glory!