

MB Biblical Seminary
The Miracles of Jesus
(syllabus)

NT-790 (MJ) (3 units, or less)
Summer School
May 25 – June 2, 2009

Tim Geddert
Office: 452-1716
Home: 498-3684
tgeddert@mbseminary.edu

Class Times: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Tuesday through Friday (May 25-28) and Monday through Tuesday (June 1-2) = 6 days times 8 hours (with breaks)

Note: This course will be taught for 3 units, but students have the option of signing up for 1 or 2 units instead and then doing fewer assignments (to be negotiated).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to understand the meaning and the function of the miracles of Jesus and of the miracle reports in the Gospels. It also discusses the theological implications of belief in the miraculous and intellectual objections that have been raised against the possibility or reality of miracles. In the course we will work inductively on various texts in the Gospels that report miraculous events, seeking to learn what the historical Jesus and the Gospel writers aimed to accomplish and to teach by means of the miracles and miracle reports.

The course will combine lecturing by the professor, class discussion of the issues raised and inductive Bible studies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of the course the student will be able to:

1. Formulate a definition of "miracles."
2. Address meaningfully the objections raised to the possibility of miracles and formulate a personal position on the nature and possibility of miraculous events.
3. Understand the function of miracles in the ministry of Jesus.
4. Understand how miracles and miracle reports function in the various Gospels.
5. Be better able to exegete and apply Gospel texts which report miraculous events.
6. Integrate the theme of "miracles" into their understanding of biblical theology and faithful Christian living.

Desired Outcomes

It is the goal of MBBS to ensure that through the courses we offer, every student shall:

1. Demonstrate commitment to live as a disciple of Jesus in Christian community
2. Articulate commitment to a biblical theological Christian perspective
3. Interpret diverse cultural contexts of ministry using theological perspectives integrated with social scientific approaches
4. Practice leadership skills.

In this course the first objective is fostered as students develop their abilities to communicate openly and honestly, while examining truth claims with fellow students, and while both affirming and critiquing the viewpoints of others. It is also fostered as we examine what role miracle expectation should play in a life of faithful discipleship.

The second is fostered as students learn to hear and understand the role of miracles in the biblical story, reflect on major theological implications of this theme, and examine specifically the role of miracles in the life and ministry of Jesus. Students will be challenged to integrate their beliefs about miracles into the larger issues of theology, Christology, discipleship and the nature of Gospel studies.

The third is fostered as students reflect on the role of miracle in the diverse cultures represented by their backgrounds, their current social/cultural context and their church communities.

The fourth is fostered as students gain insight into the ways that God is at work in the world, and as they seek to discern how their own ministries are expressions of God's work in the world. Specifically the role of miracles and miracles reports will be examined in the light of ministry contexts such as church leadership, preaching and teaching, engagement with social and national challenges and Christian counseling.

TEXT BOOKS FOR THE COURSE (Students are not required to purchase these.)

Crump, David. *Knocking on Heaven's Door: A New Testament Theology of Petitionary Prayer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006.

Lewis, C.S. *Miracles*. Touchstone, 1996.

Stackhouse, John G. *Can God be Trusted?: Faith and the Challenge of Evil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998

SCHEDULE FOR THE COURSE

Subject to revision, the topics for the class periods will be as follows:

Miracles, Skepticism and Faith

- introduction to the course; the meaning of "miracles"; issues of doubt and faith; attitudes to the miraculous in the pre-modern, modern and post-modern world; personal experiences of the miraculous.

Miracles and the Biblical World View

- a survey of biblical perspectives on the miraculous
- Miracles and the nature of God
- Miracles and the nature of the universe

The Miracle of Jesus

- the incarnation, the atonement and the resurrection.

Miracles and the Gospels

- the role of miracles and miracle reports in Mark.
- the role of miracles and miracle reports in Matthew.
- the role of miracles and miracle reports in Luke.
- the role of miracles and miracle reports in John.

Inductive Study of Miracles Reports

- we will study texts selected by the professor and the class. The following are some suggestions from which we could choose:

Miracles in Mark:

- The Stilling of the Storm in Mark (Mark 4:35-41)
- Jesus Walks on the Water (Mark 6:45-52)
- The Secret Meaning of the Feedings in Mark (6:30-44; 8:1-21)
- Symbolic Miracles (Healing the Deaf and Blind; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 10:46-52.)
- The Miracles of Jesus and Issues of Uncleaness
- Mark's Approach to Signs and Wonders

Miracles in Matthew:

- Healing a Centurion's Servant (8:5-13)
- Healing a Canaanite Woman's Daughter (15:21-28)
- The Temple Tax in the Fish's Mouth (17:24-27)

Miracles in Luke:

- Miracles and the Arrival of the Kingdom (7:18-23)
- Miracles and the Disciples' Ministry (9:1-6; 10:17-20)
- Cleansing Ten Lepers (17:11-19)
- Jesus' Appearance on the Road to Emmaus (24:13-35)

Miracles in John:

- Turning Water into Wine (2:1-11)
- The Cripple at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-15)
- The Healing of the Man Born Blind (9:1-7 [41])
- The Resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-44)
- "Doubting Thomas" (20:19-31)
- 153 Fish and Peter's Encounter with the Resurrected Jesus (21:1-14 [23])

General Issues:

- Miracles on the Sabbath
- The Link Between Healing and Forgiveness (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26; Matt. 9:1-8)
- Miracles and the Necessity of Faith
- The Cursing of the Fig Tree (Mark 11:12-14, 20-26; Matt. 21:18-22)
- Exorcisms
- The Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8; Matt. 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36)
- Resurrections Performed by Jesus

ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE COURSE

For 2 Units:

1. Reading: Read 800 pages, starting with the course textbooks and supplementing with other books (suggestions will be given in class). Write a brief assessment of each book read (approximately a half page per book). Estimated time: 20 hours.
2. Critical Review: Write a critical review of C.S. Lewis' book Miracles. Evaluate the soundness of its arguments and its faithfulness to your understanding of the Bible. How did the book help you understand the meaning of miracles, the nature of the biblical miracles and the function of miracles then and now? Length approximately 4 (double spaced) pages. Estimated time: 4 hours.
3. Inductive Study: Do an inductive study of two Gospel texts that report miracles. Write up your findings in two short papers, approximately 6 - 8 pages (double spaced) each. These studies should be of texts that are not studied during the second week of class. Suggested guidelines for doing an inductive study will be distributed and discussed in class. Estimated time: 12 hours for each paper (= 24 hours)
4. Reflection Paper: Write a 5 page paper, entitled:

Miracles: How my mind has changed (or stayed the same).

Your paper should formulate your own personal position on the nature and function of miracles and should indicate new insights you have gained through this course and the assignments associated with it. Estimated time: 7 hours.

Total Assignment Load: 55 hours

For 3 Units:

1. Same as # 1 above (estimated time: 20 hours)
2. Same as # 2 above (estimated time: 4 hours)
3. Same as # 3 above (estimated time: 24 hours)
4. Instead of # 4 above, write a researched position paper on the topic:

The Place of Miracles in the Christian Faith

Your paper should reflect on such topics as:

- the place of miracles in the biblical world view,
- typical attitudes to the miraculous in the pre-modern, modern and post-modern world,
- the verifiability of the miraculous,
- the relationship between miracles and faith.

Specific Guidelines:

- Reading: You should read a minimum of 200 additional pages in preparation for this assignment; please report which articles/books make up your additional 200 pages. (estimated time: 5 hours)

- Writing: Research paper should be carefully researched and should cite references used. Any standard annotation style (APA; footnotes; endnotes, etc.) is acceptable. Your paper should also contain a bibliography containing at least 15 relevant entries (books and articles). Length: approximately 20 double spaced pages (estimated time: 40 hours).

Total Assignment Load: 93 hours

DUE DATES:

- Please report the completion of all reading assignments by July 31. All written assignments are due August 14.

GRADING:

- Grades will be based on the quality of the written assignments, weighted as follows:

For 2 units:

- # 2 = 20 %
- # 3 = 60 % (30 % each)
- # 4 = 20 %

For 3 units:

- # 2 = 10 %
- # 3 = 40 % (20% each)
- # 4 = 50 %

After calculating your grade based on the quality of written assignments, marks will be deducted for failure to complete reading assignments and/or for excessive absenteeism from class or lateness in submitting assignments.

Academic Policies

MBBS academic policies (as well as other school policies) are described at <http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/>. These policies provide guidance on academic integrity and plagiarism, accommodations for disability, incomplete course work, extensions, dates for changing registration, non-discriminatory and inclusive language, appeals, grading templates, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and will be held responsible for adhering to them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to you or to a situation that you face in your studies, please speak to your professor or consult the Registrar.

Class Participation is one of the most significant parts of the shared learning experience at MBBS. Any student who misses more than 25% of the class time in a course may have their grade reduced by a full letter grade and may be at risk for failing the course. Exceptions to this policy may be considered because of medical or family emergencies; but all exceptions must be approved by the faculty member and the Academic Dean.

Course evaluations are to be completed online and are due one week after the completion of the course. Official grades will not be posted until the student's evaluation of the course is completed.

Evaluation. All written assignments will be assessed according the following categories: appropriateness, clarity, comprehensiveness, creativity, argumentation, form and care. "Student work will be evaluated by two standards: a) by what is considered the appropriate level of

graduate performance, and b) by comparison with work submitted in a given class” (see MBBS academic guidelines). The letter grades conversions follow the MBBS Grading Template: A (100-94%), A- (93-90%), B+ (89-87%), B (86-83%), B (82-80%), C+ (79-77%), C (76-73%), C- (72-70%), and F (69-0%). The performance expectations are as follows: "B" is the baseline which means the student is doing satisfactory work. "B+" or higher grades indicate the student has exceeded the baseline performance standard. "C" grade indicates that the student has not achieved the baseline level.

Formatting Specifications. On questions of style and citation form, consult Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research papers, Reports, Theses*, 11th Edition. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000. Any of the styles explained in that resource are acceptable, but please be consistent.

Electronic Submission of papers is acceptable. Please email them to tgeddert@mbseminary.edu. Your assignments should be attached documents using Word, RTF, or PDF format.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: There are not many great books on miracles in general or miracles of Jesus in particular. For studies of any particular miracle reported in the Gospels, it is usually best to examine good commentaries on the particular texts. What follows is a small selection of very diverse books (including our texts) on miracles, not necessarily all directly about the miracles of Jesus.

Arnold, Clinton. *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters*. InterVarsity, 1992.

Blackburn, Barry, *Theios Aner and the Markan Miracle Traditions*. Mohr, 1991.

Brown, Colin. *Miracles and the Critical Mind*. Eerdmans, 1983.

Brown, Colin. *That You May Believe*. Eerdmans, 1985.

Crump, David. *Knocking on Heaven's Door: A New Testament Theology of Petitionary Prayer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006.

Eve, Eric. *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.

Fridrichsen, A. *The Problem of Miracle in Primitive Christianity*. Augsburg, 1972.

Fuller, R. H. *Interpreting the Miracles*. Westminster, 1963.

Geddert, Timothy. *Double Take: New Meanings from Old Stories*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Kindred Press, 2007.

Geisler, Norman L. *Miracles and the Modern Mind*. Baker, 1992.

- Hebbelthwaithe, Brian. Evil, Suffering and Religion. Hawthorne Books, 1976.
- Jantzen, Grace. "Miracles Reconsidered." *Christian Scholar's Review* 9 (1980): 354-58.
- Kee, H.C. Miracle in the Early Christian World. A Study in Sociohistorical Method. Yale U.P., 1883.
- Lewis, C.S. Miracles. Touchstone, 1996.
- Lewis, C.S. The Problem of Pain. MacMillan, 1962.
- Loos, van der, H. The Miracles of Jesus. Brill, 1968.
- Miller, Calvin. The Singer. Intervarsity Press, 1975.
- Moule, C.F.D. (ed.) Miracles. Mowbray, 1965.
- Mussner, F. The Miracles of Jesus. U. of Notre Dame Press, 1968.
- Nickell, Joe. Looking for a Miracle: Weeping Icons, Relics, Stigmata, Visions and Healing Cures. Prometheus Books, 1993.
- Peterson, Michael. Evil and the Christian God. Baker, 1982.
- Polkinghorne, J. C. Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005.
- Remus, H. Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century. Cambridge, 1983.
- Richardson, A. The Miracle Stories of the Gospels. SCM: 1942.
- Smith, Morton. Jesus the Magician. Harper and Row, 1978.
- Stackhouse, John G. Can God be Trusted?: Faith and the Challenge of Evil. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Swinburne, Richard. The Concept of Miracle: MacMillan, 1970.
- Theissen. G. The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition. Fortress, 1983.
- Twelftree, Graham H. Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study. Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity, 1999.
- Warfield, B.B. Miracles: Yesterday and Today, True and False. Eerdmans, 1954.
- West, D. J. Eleven Lourdes Miracles. Duckworth, 1957.

Wiebe, Phillip H. Visions of Jesus. Oxford, 1997.

Wimber, John. Power Evangelism. Harper and Row, 1986.