

## Did They Really Happen?

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Even after two thousand years, the miracles of Jesus still raise questions: Did Jesus really cause the lame to walk, give sight to the blind, and raise the dead? Or were His supernatural acts merely legends created by His followers? Many simply can't believe that the miracles recorded in the New Testament Gospels actually happened or that miracles are even possible.

What evidence can we find for a miracle-working Jesus? And what can the ancient land of the Bible reveal?

"The Miracles of Jesus: Did They Really Happen?"—next, on Day of Discovery.

This is the land of the Bible, Israel, the land where Jesus lived. Many today respect the historical figure of Jesus as a great teacher, a wise man, or a moral leader who was unjustly tortured and put to death. But some don't believe He is what He said He was—God in human form. Nor do some believe He actually performed the miracles recorded in the Bible. Since most people have never seen the natural, physical laws of the universe obviously altered, there are those who doubt that true miracles could ever occur.

Day of Discovery's Mart De Haan and Jimmy DeYoung have returned to the land of the Bible to visit the places where Jesus was said to have done miracles that caused large crowds to follow him through the lake region of Galilee.

(Tiberias, Galilee)

**Mart:** Hey, Jim.

**Jimmy:** Yes, sir!

**Mart:** Hey, what are you doing?

**Jimmy:** Did you get what you needed?

**Mart:** Yeah, I did. You too?

**Jimmy:** I certainly did.

**Mart:** Good! What are you guys doing out here?

**Jimmy:** Looks like a bunch of teenagers taking their kayak lessons. There's the master pilot out there giving instruction as they always do.

**Mart:** I'm glad it's his job.

**Jimmy:** Huh?

**Mart:** I'm glad it's his job.

**Jimmy:** Yes, indeed, with all those teenagers.

Welcome to a quiet morning here in Tiberias on the promenade, except for the sound of the teenagers out there in their kayaks.

Tiberias was built by Herod Antipas in AD 18-20 during the lifetime of Jesus Christ, and in fact it was in this region where Jesus Christ would have had His three-and-a-half year ministry headquartered at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee in Capernaum.

The Bible doesn't record that Jesus ever did visit here in Tiberias, which was a Roman city. Today it's a Jewish city. It's quiet this morning, but on Shabbat in the evening after Shabbat the place comes alive.

**Mart:** In many ways, Tiberias is like any other community around the world: common people doing everyday things. Even these fishermen back here are trying to make a buck. And yet this community, this region, is linked to another group of people in another time, who said that they saw things that they had never seen before.

*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Matthew 4:23 (NKJV)*

## 1-MRD Journal:

One of the key words the Gospel writers use to describe Jesus' miracle working is power. Luke tells us that "power went out of Jesus, and He healed them all." This was demonstrated in many other ways as well. According to the Gospel accounts, Jesus showed that He also had power over nature, power over the spiritual world, and power over death.

**Mart:** To this day, people come from all over the world to visit those spots, and they're talking about miracles. The question comes to us today—do we believe in miracles? And if so, what do we mean by a miracle? And then we have to make up our mind: What do we think? Is it possible? Could the miracles the Bible talks about that link to this region really have happened?

(Scene of Tiberias streets)

## 2-MRD Journal:

Because people from all over the world come here to see the places where the Bible says Jesus did miracles, I took the opportunity to ask some of the local people whether they believe in miracles.

(Interview with man standing in restaurant)

**Man:** What do you want to know about?

**Mart:** The question is: Can people today believe in miracles? If I were to say to you, do—

**Man:** You know there are many people who believe in miracles—you have many people.

**Mart:** Do you believe in miracles?

**Man:** Oh yeah, I also do.

**Mart:** What do you mean by a miracle?

**Man:** Everything. This time now, here, there's a miracle.

**Mart:** Okay, so even unusual events in life.

**Man:** Everything in the world is a miracle, everything that is happening. Every minute, every second—everything is a miracle.

**Mart:** Why is it a miracle?

**Man:** Because nothing is before here. And now we are here.

(Interview with young woman on street)

**Mart:** The question is: Can people today believe in miracles? And if I were to say to you do you believe in miracles?

**Woman:** Yes, I do.

**Mart:** You do?

**Woman:** Yes, every day is a miracle. When the sun is shining and then it's going down, it's a miracle. When a child is born, it's a miracle. You don't think...?

**Mart:** I think so, yes.

**Woman:** And sometimes miracles happen and you don't see them, but after a long time you understand it was a miracle—it was meant to be.

**Mart:** What about religious miracles like in the Scriptures?

**Woman:** Oh, you mean like God giving rain in the middle of the desert or something like that, or sending food? I don't know. I think that sometimes when people, when a person is in trouble, I think that God sends him help. Sometimes we can see that way, sometimes He doesn't. But the miracle happens inside you, so you can see it.

(Interview with three teenage boys on street)

**Mart:** If I were to ask you the question, "Do you believe in miracles?" what would you say?

**Teen:** No.

**Mart:** No? Why not?

**Teen:** Because. I don't know—that's my answer.

**Mart:** So in the past, today, you believe just in natural process?

**Teen:** Yeah.

(Interview with husband and wife with small child on street)

**Mart:** If I were to say, “Do you believe in miracles?” what would you say?

**Woman:** I would say miracles are real and we experience over life so many miracles that we never thought would be real and they become true.

**Mart:** Okay, so you’re talking about things that have happened in your own life?

**Woman:** Yes that’s right.

**Mart:** So—

**Woman:** Like, for example, the miracle of giving birth, the miracle of a new place that I never thought I was able to know. And something that we were expecting that everybody could say that will be impossible, and they become a miracle for us.

### 3-MRD Journal:

I sensed in the residents of Tiberias that the miracles they believed in would not have been as dramatic as someone turning water into wine or bringing a dead person back to life. Yet, according to the Gospel narratives, Jesus displayed an authority and power over nature that had no natural explanation.

**Dr. William Craig [Talbot School of Theology]:** Traditionally, miracles have been defined as violations of the laws of nature. But I think that’s an inaccurate and misleading representation. It makes God sound like some sort of a criminal, breaking a civil law. He’s violating Mother Nature. And I think it’s therefore better to define miracles as naturally impossible events. That is to say, a miracle is an event which takes place at a time and place where the natural causes that are operative at that time and place would be insufficient to produce that event.

## 4-MRD Journal:

This region of Galilee has always been significant in the history of the Middle East because of its abundance of water. It ranges from the snowy peak of Mount Hermon on the north to the well-watered Jezreel Valley in the south. So, quite appropriately, many of Jesus' miracles involved water—beginning with His turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. That demonstration of power over nature marked the start of Jesus' public ministry—a period of some three years that, like the Jordan River, moved from the Galilee south toward Jerusalem. To get a sense of this movement, Jimmy and I decided to experience the Jordan River in its many moods as it tumbles from the slopes of Mount Hermon and then broadens out as it approaches the Sea of Galilee. I began with a quick float in an inflatable kayak on some of the river's tamer white water.

(Jordan River, Mart in kayak, Jimmy on shore)

**Jimmy:** Boy, I hope I see my friend Mart again. I'm sure we will somewhere downstream here on the Jordan River. You know, when somebody thinks of the Holy Land, it stirs up images of a desert plateau where there's a hot desert with camels, maybe flocks of sheep or goats, or a wadi, a dry riverbed—not here in the Galilee. This fast-flowing water is coming down from Mount Hermon; the melting snows there on the highest mountain in Israel. And this northern portion of the Jordan River leads on into the Sea of Galilee. In fact, it flows right through the area that New Testament writers describe as the region where Jesus would have performed many of His miracles.

(Mart arriving at shore)

**Mart:** You know, talking about miracles of the Bible is a little bit like talking about finding white water in the land of the Bible. Finding those miracles in either Testament is a little bit like finding fast-moving stretches of water in otherwise slow-moving periods of history.

But when you do find them, whether it's the miracles of the Exodus or Joshua and the conquest of the land, or whether it's the miracles of Christ, once you find that white water, you have to decide what you're going to do with them: look at them from a distance, consider them interesting, or move in closer for a better look.

Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.