

Amazing Unremarkable Healing

Galilean Ministry Part 4
Mark 1:28-34a 10/28/2017

Summary: The way to study the historical Jesus is not from the liberals who inject their naturalistic bias, but by reading the eyewitness records in the gospels. The people were amazed at Jesus' authority, but that response is inadequate. Only repentance and faith are sufficient. That's the goal of studying this book, to get so we really, deeply believe the true portrait of Jesus. Jesus healed a woman's fever on the Sabbath in very tender fashion, showing that the disciples' families were not left high and dry. Also showing the range of his miracles, and his concern for the unremarkable moments of life. Jesus' miracles were prolific, and are well attested.

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Mark 1:28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. **29** As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. **30** Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. **31** So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. **32** That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. **33** The whole town gathered at the door, **34** and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Introduction

The Historical Jesus

How many of you are familiar with the Jesus Seminar, that was active in the 80's and 90's? Liberal scholars got together on what they call the quest for the "historical" Jesus. Their belief is that the Jesus presented in the New Testament was not a historical figure. It's almost all legend and myth. But these scholars are able to see through all legend and myth and pick out the little bits of truth that applied to the actual, historical Jesus.

It was one of the most colossal displays of scholarly arrogance imaginable. These men, 2000 years removed from the things they pontificate about, want us to believe that they know the historical Jesus better than the men who actually lived with Jesus at that time saw him with their own eyes. And we're supposed to trust these men, instead of the eyewitnesses. Even though the eyewitnesses show every sign we know of of being truthful witnesses and reliable sources. And they were so genuine, that they laid down their lives and suffered and died for the message that they taught about Jesus. How many of the Jesus seminar scholars do you think of lay down their lives and died for the Jesus that they are propagating? I think you can count them on one thumb and have room left.

The conclusions that these scholars reach is very predictable. They come up with a Jesus that matches our society's beliefs and world view to a T. It just so happens that the true, historical Jesus fits in to their belief system perfectly. He taught everything they agree with, nothing they disagree with, and the truth about who he was aligns exactly with their conceptions and philosophies about reality. What are the odds?

This is what people always do. They always want to remake Jesus in their own image. The scholarly world has an aversion to the supernatural and to miracles, so, surprise, surprise, the historical Jesus they come up with was not a miracle worker. He had no power. He didn't claim to be God, or the Messiah or anything like that. There's really nothing special about him. He shared their value system, their politics, their belief system.

The problem is, not only is there no evidence for their view, and plenty of counter-evidence against it, but also – a man like the Jesus that they imagine would've never been crucified. He would've bothered anybody. He certainly wouldn't have been followed as the Messiah or as the Son of God. He would never have been noticed and he would've been very quickly forgotten.

If you want to go on a quest for the historical Jesus, don't go to a bunch of men in a seminar 2000 years removed who have an obvious personal agenda. If you want to see the historical Jesus, study the history. Study the eyewitness accounts. And where are the best eyewitness accounts compiled? In the NT.

I'm always amazed when people say, "Why isn't there more historical evidence about Jesus outside of the Bible?" The Bible is a collection of all the best historical records. That's like if someone took all the best historical accounts of Alexander the Great, compiled them in one library, and then someone said, "Why aren't there any good accounts outside of that library?"

This study that we're doing here on Saturday nights in the Gospel of Mark is a quest for the historical Jesus and his gospel that he preached. And the goal is very simple. It's exactly the same goal Jesus had in his ministry.

Mark 1:14 ... Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Jesus' objective was that people would believe and repent. And so that's our objective. And there will be weeks, like tonight, where there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of practical application. You'll walk away thinking, "Ok, Jesus said and did those things. That's great, but what are the implications for how I should live? What's the practical application?" The practical application is this: believe and repent.

Faith is a hard thing to build. You can tell yourself that something is true, but it's something else to really, truly believe it. How many times do you say, "I know the way of righteousness is more rewarding

than this sin” but then you commit the sin anyway? Why is that? You don’t really believe that God’s way is better. We are always like the guy we’ll see in Mark 9 who says **I believe. Help me overcome my unbelief!** There are so many things about Jesus that we kind of believe, but that belief hasn’t sunk down deep into our soul to where it drives our attitudes and emotions and desires. And so in this study we’re going to look, week after week, at Jesus and watch him closely and listen to him intently and just keep exposing ourselves to the truth about him more and more until the real truth about him sinks down deep and solidifies our faith, and makes that faith pervade every nook and cranny of our being.

Review

We left off last time with the people in the synagogue astonished at Jesus. It says that in verse 22, and it says it again in verse 27. Jesus drives out this demon with authority unlike anything they’d ever seen, and look at their reaction:

Amazingly Authoritative Preaching

Mark 1:26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

The demon tries to hurt or kill this guy on the way out, but the demon is so terrified by Jesus that he just leaves with a shriek. And Luke lets us know that even though he threw this guy down and made him convulse, the man was unharmed. Jesus didn’t let this demon hurt the guy on his way out.

But the demon would have if he could have. That’s something to keep in mind. Satan promises you all kinds of pleasure connected with sin, but when you’re tempted, remind yourself – the one who is offering you this wonderful pleasure, hates you. And the split second you’re of no more use to him, he’ll throw you down on the ground and try to hurt you or kill you for no reason other than to express his hatred for you.

So Jesus drives out this demon in spectacular fashion, but the main thing they are amazed about is still his teaching.

26 The evil spirit ... came out of him with a shriek. 27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority!

Even right after that ordeal with the demon, still, what amazed them most was his teaching. If you lived back then and heard Jesus preach, and then you saw him do some spectacular miracle, you would walk away amazed at both, but more amazed at the sermon than the miracle. But then they also marvel at his authority over the demon.

Total Authority

So Mark is showing us the scope of Jesus’ authority. There are different kinds of authority. One kind is *intellectual* authority – the authority of the scholar. Like if we said, “This person is the foremost authority in the world on aviation.” They know better than anyone.

Another kind of authority is *controlling* authority – like the authority of a policeman. He can tell you to pull over and you have to pull over. You have to do what he says.

In this section, Mark is showing us that Jesus had both kinds. Controlling authority – he tells the fisherman to leave everything and follow him, and they have to do it. He tells the demon to leave, and he has to do it. Jesus can tell anyone and any time to do anything and they have to do it. He has absolute controlling authority.

And he also has absolute intellectual authority. He is the foremost authority on God. No one can contradict him, no one can prove him wrong, no one can add anything to what Jesus taught us about God; Jesus’ teaching is the absolute final word.

And all of that was very obvious that day in the synagogue and so the people were amazed. But here's the really important point Mark wants to press home: that's not enough.

Purpose: Repentance, not Amazement

Again – what was the objective of Jesus' preaching? Was it to amaze people?

Mark 1:15 ...Repent and believe the good news!

The response that Jesus was looking for was not just amazement, but repentance and belief. The fact that they are amazed and perplexed was due to their eyes and ears experiencing one thing, but their heart refusing to accept it.

Matthew 11:20 Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.

23 And you, Capernaum ... you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

Jesus' message is, "Repent and believe," and so anything short of doing that is a rejection of Jesus. It's not enough to just listen to Jesus. It's not enough to be amazed and astonished at Jesus. In fact, it's not even enough to be so amazed that you go out and spread the word about Jesus.

News

28 News about him spread quickly (immediately) over the whole region of Galilee.

Everyone is going out and giving their testimony, and Jesus becomes instantly famous. And that fame is going to turn into a problem. We'll see why that is later on in chapter 1. But at this point Mark just lets us know that it's starting. Jesus' name quickly became a household word throughout the region.

Healing One Woman

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.

So they did what we do – after church lets out, we go home for lunch. But there's a problem.

30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever

Contrary to what the RCC teaches, Simon-Peter was married. That's the only way to get a mother-in-law.¹ Peter lived in Capernaum with his wife and his wife's mom and his brother Andrew lived with them as well.

Fever Was a Serious Problem

And by the way, if you visit Israel today you can go to the place that's known as the site of Simon Peter's house. Some of the places of interests in the holy land are more authentic than others, but believe it or not, it really is quite plausible that that place really is the site of Peter's house. And it's nearby where they found the foundations of the synagogue of Jesus' time.

Anyway, they go there for lunch, and they find that Mrs. Peter is upset, because her mom is sick with a fever. Luke, who was a doctor, calls it a high fever,² so this is a serious illness.

¹ See also 1 Cor.9:5.

² Lk.4:38.

A lot of things can cause fevers – infections, viruses, all kinds of very serious and deadly diseases. She might have had malaria or something like that. Very often, at that time, if you got a high fever, it was fatal.

It was a common problem, so they had a lot of treatments and remedies for fever. There's even a section in the Talmud on how to treat fever. Most of the Jewish remedies were superstitious, like wearing an amulet consisting of seven sets of seven things hung around the neck,³ or go to a cross-road and pick up the first ant with a burden that you see and place it in a copper tube, and shake the tube and say: "What thou carriest on me, that I carry on thee."⁴

Other remedies were more practical, like suddenly spilling water on the person.⁵ I'm sure that was a real joy – having people do a surprise ice bucket challenge on your head when you have the flu.

For pagans, it was more of a religious issue. The Romans had at least 3 temples devoted to the god of fever, where they would try to placate the god who sends fevers. They had a lot of remedies, but the one thing all the remedies had in common was that none of them worked very well.

Somebody Call a Carpenter!

All that to show you that fevers were a serious problem, and so you can imagine their concern. Some of you know what it's like to sit outside the ICU, not knowing if your loved one is going to pull through. And it's especially hard when the person is suffering – which is always the case with a high fever.

So they go to get help. But instead of calling a doctor, they call a carpenter.⁶ Those of you who have gone through something like this – how many of you sat out there in the waiting room of the ICU searching Google for carpenters? When have you ever seen a medical emergency and you shout out, "Quick, somebody call a carpenter"? Why do they go to a carpenter in a moment like this?

It's because they knew Jesus. They knew, he's not a fisherman, but he can make every fish in the sea of Galilee jump into your net. He's not a trained rabbi, but he can preach like nothing you've ever heard. He's unschooled in the procedures for exorcism, but he orders demons around and they obey. They had seen the miracles, they saw what happened at his baptism, they saw what he did to that demon that very morning – he may not be a doctor, but they knew mom's chances of survival would be higher with this carpenter than with an actual doctor. And they were right.

The Healing

30 ... they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her.

No formulas or incantations, no shaking ants in a tube or making her drink some weird concoction or splashing water on her or going to a pagan temple. He just helps her up.

In Matthew's account it says first he touched her hand.⁷ That's something Matthew often emphasizes – how Jesus would touch people no one else wanted to touch. One of Matthew's big emphases was how Jesus dealt with untouchable people. Very often fevers were caused by contagious diseases, so touching the person could cost you your life. But Matthew shows us that Jesus very frequently touched sick people. If you had lived at the time of Jesus, and spent any time at all around him, it's very likely he would have touched you at some point. Especially if you were someone no one else would ever touch.

³ Babylonian Talmud, Shab. 67a.

⁴ Shab. 66b.

⁵ *Der Urquell* v. 223.

⁶ When Mark says that they told Jesus, the implication is that they were asking Jesus for help. And what Mark implies, Luke states explicitly. **Luke 4:38 ... Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.**

⁷ Mt.8:15.

So that's the part that stood out to Matthew – he touched her hand. In Luke's account, Luke says Jesus stood over her,⁸ which is the way they would describe the posture of a doctor approaching a patient. And that makes sense, because Luke was a doctor. So it's natural that Luke would notice the medical aspect of this, and present Jesus as the Great Physician.

But Mark – where did he hear about this incident?

From Peter.

Peter was there in the room.

He remembers consoling and comforting his wife, his heart breaking as his wife saw her mom suffering so much, and couldn't do anything to help, and was facing the prospect of losing her.

And Peter goes and tells Jesus. And Jesus goes straight in to where she was. After this, Peter would witness countless healings throughout the rest of Jesus' earthly life. And he would see Jesus do it a lot of different ways, with a lot of different gestures. Sometimes a word, sometimes just a thought, sometimes touching the diseased part – the eyes or ears. We'll see a little while after this when Jesus healed the paralytic, he commanded the man to get up and walk. Peter would witness all that, but as long as he lived, he would never forget how Jesus did this particular healing. After touching her hand, he clasped her hand in his, and pulled her to her feet.

Gentleness

Did she need help standing up? No – we'll see in a minute she had full strength at this point. So why help a woman up if she doesn't need any help? Tenderness. Love. Gentleness. Peter had seen the strong side of Jesus. When Jesus called him, he didn't gently help Peter out of the boat. He gave him commands – “You're exhausted? You fished all night? Go back out there and throw the nets on the other side of the boat. Now, leave everything and come follow me.” Not particularly gentle.

Peter had seen Jesus drive the priests and all the big shots out of the Temple with a whip. Just hours earlier he saw Jesus manhandle that demon. He had seen Jesus' awesome power and authority, but now he sees his tenderness with a sick woman, and it made an imprint on Peter's heart such that even people like Mark who heard the story from Peter years and years later, when they told the story, that part about helping her up was in there. I'm thinking Peter must've mentioned it every single time he told the story. “You should've seen it. He reaches down and takes hold of her hand, (and he chokes up) and the way he helped her up – I'll never forget it.”

Bruised Reed

Isaiah 42:3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

They would pick reeds out of the marsh and use them for various things. But if it got bent, then it was useless. They would just toss it and pick a new one. And that's the way society is with people. Someone makes some really bad decisions, royally messes up his life, and now he's useless. Society just tosses him to the side.

Jesus doesn't do that. He is gentle with those who are broken or weak, and he restores.

Some of you might be thinking, *That's not my experience*. Times when you felt you really needed gentleness, things got even harder. If that happened, it was probably because your faith was stronger than you thought, and God was showing you that. He was exposing how strong your faith was, and in the process, making it even stronger. But when gentleness is truly needed, Jesus is gentle.

Why is this Important?

So why does Mark include this little miracle? It's not nearly as spectacular as so many the others. It might be the least spectacular of all Jesus' miracles. One verse later Jesus heals all the sicknesses and all

⁸ Lk.4:39.

the diseases in the entire city - in one verse. Why single this one out? Why not just lump them together with all those others?

Is there something especially important about this miracle? Yes, there is. It's so important that it reported in 3 different gospels. And I can think of at least 4 reasons why.

To Show Care for the Disciples' Families

First, it shows Jesus' care for the disciples' families. Jesus had just called these men to leave everything, including family, and follow him. James and John left their dad sitting right there in the boat. That's an illustration of the radical kind of discipleship that Jesus calls his followers to. But it could potentially lead to a misunderstanding. You read about that and you might wonder, what about honor your father or mother? Is Jesus like one of those cult leaders who tell people to leave their families and then talk to them again? Does Jesus realize that guys like Peter had families and responsibilities and maybe a mother-in-law in law at home who needs him to take care of her and support her?

It seems to me that the timing of this miracle in the placement in Mark is showing us that even though following Christ means you set Christ as a higher priority than family, that doesn't mean you neglect your family, or that you're cruel to them or indifferent to them. The Holy Spirit wants us to know that the families are not left high and dry, so he includes this healing in 3 different gospels.

To Show How Jesus Valued "Unimportant" People

Secondly, this shakes up the value system of the day. In that culture, women were not considered to be important at all. If a religious leader performed lots and lots of healings, and you picked out one to describe in some detail and to highlight, it would never be the healing of a woman. It would be the healing of some big political leader or a VIP of some kind. But Christ's values are a lot different than societies values.

To Show the Range of Jesus' Miracles

Third, it shows the range of Jesus' miracles. Events appear in different order in the different gospels, but in all three gospels where this is reported, immediately after this healing, they tell about the healing of all the sick people in town. So it seems they want to show the spectrum of the healings. One modern faith healer's sister died of cancer while he was doing his big healing campaigns. He could heal strangers, but not his own sister. Jesus healed everyone in every circumstance - those very close, and those he never met. He did miracles on a small scale/large scale - friends and enemies - believers and unbelievers. Jesus is not a traveling healer with a set technique, but a man of awesome authority who responds to each situation in a unique way that teaches a particular point.

To Show Jesus' Concern for Ordinary Problems

And fourth, I think it's highlighted because of how ordinary it is. We get a lot of names in the NT, but not hers. Jesus helps this unnamed, unknown, unimportant woman in a very ordinary, private setting in her home. That's good because that's where you and I live. We live in a series of very unremarkable little moments, where ordinary aspects of this broken world press in on us, and we need God's mercy. We have our little troubles that, if someone included them in one of the gospels, everyone would say, "Why is that included?" That's where we live 99% of our lives.

We need to know that Jesus has compassion on us when the car won't start, or the bills are piling up too fast, or you've got insomnia. Those moments of life that wouldn't even be included in your own biography because they are too boring - Jesus cares about those.

Healed to Serve

31 ...The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

Jesus took her hand, and at that split second her temperature was 98.6. All the millions of diseased cells in her body suddenly disappeared. He readjusted her hypothalamus, the body's thermostat. Proteins and chemicals were brought to normal levels, and any infection was gone without a trace in an instant. Then look at how she responds.

31 ...The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

That's beautiful, isn't it? She uses her strength to serve Jesus – which not only shows us something about her heart, but it shows us the completeness of the healing. Normally if you have the flu or something that gives you a severe fever, even after you take your antibiotics or whatever, it takes a while before the strength comes back. You get a life-threatening fever, or even the flu, and it might be a couple weeks before you have your strength back.

Jesus didn't just heal the disease causing the fever, he healed all the symptoms as well. That's significant, because there are so-called "faith healers" today who try to heal someone, and the person is still sick, and they say, "You're healed, and pretty soon your symptoms will start getting better" What good is that? If I have a cold, I don't really care about the cold – what bothers me is the symptoms. I would much rather have a sickness with no symptoms than symptoms with no sickness. The symptoms are the problem. Jesus instantly healed both disease and symptoms.

So then what does this woman do? She uses the strength Jesus gives her to serve. That's the purpose of our strength. It's the purpose of healing, it's the purpose of health, strength, vitality, ability – everything God gives us. He gives those things to us so we can serve.

And do you want to hear something really cool? When it says **she began to wait on them**, that word *to wait on* (*daikoneo*) was used one time already in this gospel – back in v.13, when the angels waited on Jesus out in the wilderness during his temptation. Two parties have the high honor and staggering privilege of waiting on Jesus – the holy angels, and Peter's mother-in-law.

And that's evidence that Peter's mother-in-law had the right response to Jesus' miracles and teaching. Later on in the book (ch.9,10), Jesus will teach that the objective for his followers is for them to become servants. And the greatest of his disciples will be the ones who were the servants of all. So when James and John come later and ask Jesus for the #1 and #2 seats in the kingdom, God the Father might have been saying, "Sorry guys. The #1 spot is going to Peter's mother-in-law."

Healing Everyone Else

The People Come After Sabbath

Ok, so mom is now up and running, she gets a meal together, and they all sit down and enjoy a nice dinner and some fellowship. Now fast forward a few hours. They have to light some lamps around the house, because the sun is going down. That's where v.32 picks it up.

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demonized.

For the Jews, the day ended at sunset, so they were waiting for the next day. If this had been in our culture, they would have all showed up at Peter's door right at midnight – right when the new day begins. Why did they wait until the next day? Because in their legalistic system, it was against the law to heal people on the Sabbath. It's considered work, and you can't work on the Sabbath. Which means ... it would raise a few eyebrows for the people around Jesus when earlier he had come right from the synagogue, on the Sabbath, and went ahead and healed Peter's mother-in-law right then, without waiting until sundown. Jesus ignored their Sabbath rules.

But the people of Capernaum aren't going to do that. They just let all the sick people suffer for one more afternoon, so they can wait until the Sabbath is over. We will find out a little later in the book how Jesus felt about that. He took a very dim view of the idea that you can't heal someone on the Sabbath. And we'll see that come to head beginning of chapter 3. I just mention it now because I think it's significant that, as much as their Sabbath philosophy angered Jesus, still, Jesus goes ahead and heals these people. He had compassion on people even while they were doing things that angered him.

So they light a couple lamps around the house, and suddenly there is a knock at the door. Peter's wife opens it, and her eyes get as big as quarters, she loses her breath for a second and takes a couple steps back. Peter runs over and looks out there, and there is a sea of people. Mark says **the whole town gathered at the door**. The whole town shows up. Way more people than showed up for synagogue yesterday. Everybody's there.

That's not really a surprise. If Jesus were here in the room right now and offered to heal any problem you had, how many of you would raise your hand? And how many would bring a loved one? It's no surprise at all that pretty much everyone in town would have showed up.

Countless Healings

33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases.

The faith healers of our day offer their ministry to certain select people in a controlled setting. And they only deal with certain ailments. Not Jesus. Any number, anytime, anywhere, any disease, any injury – he healed instantly and totally.

And he gave each one personal attention. He could have just waved his arm over the whole crowd and instantly made them all better. But that's not what he did.

Luke 4:40 and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.

He healed every single one in the crowd, one at a time. He wanted to touch them. He wanted to meet them face to face and look into their eyes and give that one person his attention at that moment. And so, taking that approach, this had to have gone very late into the night.

The Purpose of the Miracles

Let me read you a quotation from the book, *The Jesus I Never Knew* by Philip Yancy. "As I now reflect on his life, miracles play a less prominent role than what I had imagined as a child. Superman, he was not. Yes, Jesus performed miracles - about three dozen depending on how you count them - but the gospels actually downplay them... the miracles raise big questions for me. Why are there so few?"⁹ Why are they so few? The only way you can count and get three dozen is if you completely ignore the summary verses like this one. Certain, select miracles are described to teach us some things, but nowhere near all of Jesus' miracles are described. There were hundreds and probably thousands of others. Just right here in v.34 Jesus performed way more than three dozen miracles. He heals everyone in town one at a time.

John 2:23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name.

John 3:2 "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Luke 7:21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.

⁹ Yancy, 166.

Jesus did that flurry of miracles just to answer John the Baptist's question about whether he was really the Messiah.

John 20:30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

John 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

Jesus' miraculous ministry was prolific. God doesn't want us to believe based on blind faith, and so he gives extensive, compelling proof for everything.

Acts 2:22 Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

Hebrews 2:3 ... This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Never in human history has there been a supernatural display of divine power like there was with Jesus. And it wasn't done in a corner. The multitudes witnessed these miracles. They are historically attested. It's not like Mohammad or Joseph Smith, claiming that something happened in a cave that no one else saw. We have multiple, detailed eye-witness accounts of them. Not even Jesus' enemies argued about whether he had supernatural power. They questioned whether it was from God or not, but nobody questioned whether he did the miracles. We have zero accounts from that time of anyone questioning whether Jesus did the miracles.

And the historians who wrote have every characteristic of a trustworthy, reliable witness. They recorded things as they happened, even when it made them look like morons (which was most of the time – especially in Mark). They recorded things Jesus said and did that don't seem to fit well into Christian doctrine, and are difficult to explain. There's no evidence that they were dishonest. They all suffered and died for this message. No one suffers and dies for something they know to be a lie.

They describe the events the way truthful, reliable witnesses tend to describe things (unembellished, without a lot of adjectives and descriptors trying to build it up). Their stories are different, which is important, because when two people give identical testimony of the same event, it means they colluded, so their stories would match. Reliable witnesses aren't like that. Their descriptions will always be different, because people see things from different perspectives and notice different things. And that's exactly what we find in the gospel writers – different accounts. Matthew says, "Jesus touched her hand," Luke says, "He stood over her," Mark says, "He helped her up," John doesn't even mention this event. All different, and yet, zero contradictions.

So they are reliable witnesses and truthful men. "But what if people doctored their testimony after the fact? What if people added some things in over the past 2000 years?" They have. People have added things and subtracted things. We know that for sure.

How do we know that for sure? Because there are so many thousands of copies, and so many copies from very early – all the way back to the first century, that we can compare all the copies and see when people tried to make changes. We can see, "Oh, this sentence was added in the 9th Century. This verse got left out of one copy starting the 12th Century, etc." All we have to do is compare all the copies, and it's very easy to see what the originals said.

Conclusion

There's no getting around it – these things happened. There's a reason why Jesus turned this world upside down and we're sitting here talking about a poor carpenter who lived and died 2000 years ago and never wrote a book or held office or built anything or served in the military. These things happened. And the reason they are revealed is so we would repent and believe.

Let this portrait of Jesus – and all the other portraits we’ll see throughout this book, sink down deep into your heart. Fix your thoughts on these things so that you *really* believe. Deep down in your soul you really believe that Jesus is the ultimate intellectual authority, so you never question his way. You really believe Jesus can and will eliminate evil altogether someday. You really see him as the solution to sin. Deep down in your bones, you believe that Jesus is compassionate and merciful, and cares about the unremarkable moments of your mundane existence.

When you believe those things, you will let go of sin, and you will use the strength and gifts he gives you to serve others.