

# 20 THE WAY OF NEW LIFE

In June of 1944 the German army in Europe was braced against a possible Allied attack. Hitler had strengthened the forces on the coast of France. Lookouts constantly scanned the English Channel from the French coast for any sign of an attack on the Nazi's "Atlantic Wall."

On June 5 the weather was terrible. Storms blew over the English Channel. But when the sun rose and the clouds began to lift on June 6, Nazi lookouts frantically sent messages to their high command. There, in the English Channel, was the greatest assembled military force the world had ever seen. Five thousand large ships were aligned with the coast in rows as far as the eye could see. Four thousand landing craft were ready to take soldiers ashore. Eleven thousand aircraft took to the air with guns and bombs to help clear the coast of the enemy, while the giant guns of the battleships rained destruction on the coastal batteries from as far as 20 miles away.

This was D-Day. In all, some three million Allied soldiers took part. Before it was over the Allied forces had landed its armies on the beaches of Normandy. Finally in May of 1945 the German army surrendered. Europe was free again.

## 3 STATEMENTS

- Miracles were an important part of Jesus' ministry—they announced the coming reign of God.
- Jesus is the power of God to set free all those who are in bondage to the power of the devil.
- In the miracles of healing and raising from the dead, we have a picture of God's kingdom.

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*Source*

## THE COMING REIGN OF GOD

In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus laid before the people of his hometown of Nazareth and us the kingdom objectives. As Jesus began his ministry in the neighboring town of Capernaum, those kingdom objectives started to become a reality. Jesus' whole ministry—from the announcement of his birth to his resurrection—was centered on these kingdom objectives. In his teaching, preaching, and especially in the miracles he performed, Jesus set out to free people from everything that holds God's people in bondage. He made real the reign of God in the world.

*Miracles were an important part of Jesus' ministry—they announced the coming reign of God. Jesus used miracles in the same way he used parables. Miracles and parables point beyond themselves to a gracious and lov-*

ing God. One of the remarkable and unforgettable things about Jesus is that through miracles, he did change people's tragedies into new beginnings.

Through miracles, Jesus demonstrated the power God had given him. Look up the following Bible passages. Match the miracle described with the power Jesus demonstrated in its use. Answers may be used more than once.

1. \_\_\_\_ Luke 4:33-37    A. power over sickness
2. \_\_\_\_ Luke 4:38-40    B. power over Satan
3. \_\_\_\_ Luke 5:1-11    C. power over nature
4. \_\_\_\_ Luke 5:12-16    D. power over death
5. \_\_\_\_ Luke 7:1-10
6. \_\_\_\_ Luke 7:11-17
7. \_\_\_\_ Luke 8:22-25
8. \_\_\_\_ Luke 8:26-39

The word *miracle* is used to describe what Jesus did that is beyond human understanding and natural explanation. We might say that a miracle is an act of God that makes the impossible possible.

## POWER OVER SATAN

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record that the first of Jesus' miraculous powers was demonstrated in a confrontation with demons.

In Jesus' day, demons were thought of as spirits who were harmful to people and rebellious toward God. People feared demons and thought that people were helpless before demons.

Read Luke 4:31-35 aloud as a skit. You will need a narrator, Jesus, and the man. Then answer the following questions.

1. Luke tells us this confrontation took place in a synagogue as Jesus was teaching. What does the location of this miracle say to you about the tactics of the demons?

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2. Look closely at what the demon said through the man. How did the demon identify itself?

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3. What did Jesus do to cast out the demon?

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4. In Mark 5:1-13 and Luke 8:26-39, Jesus did battle with another demon who possessed a man. Quickly read verses 2-5 of Mark's version. How had the things the demon did to the man separated him from the following?

- a. his community \_\_\_\_\_
- b. God \_\_\_\_\_
- c. himself \_\_\_\_\_

5. What happened to the man after Jesus' miracle of casting out the demons?

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Are demons real? Yes. Jesus and Scripture are very clear about that. The demons that Jesus exercised his power over were real, destructive powers in real people's lives. They brought about the separation of women and men from their loving God. *Jesus is the power of God to set free all those who are in bondage to the power of the devil.*

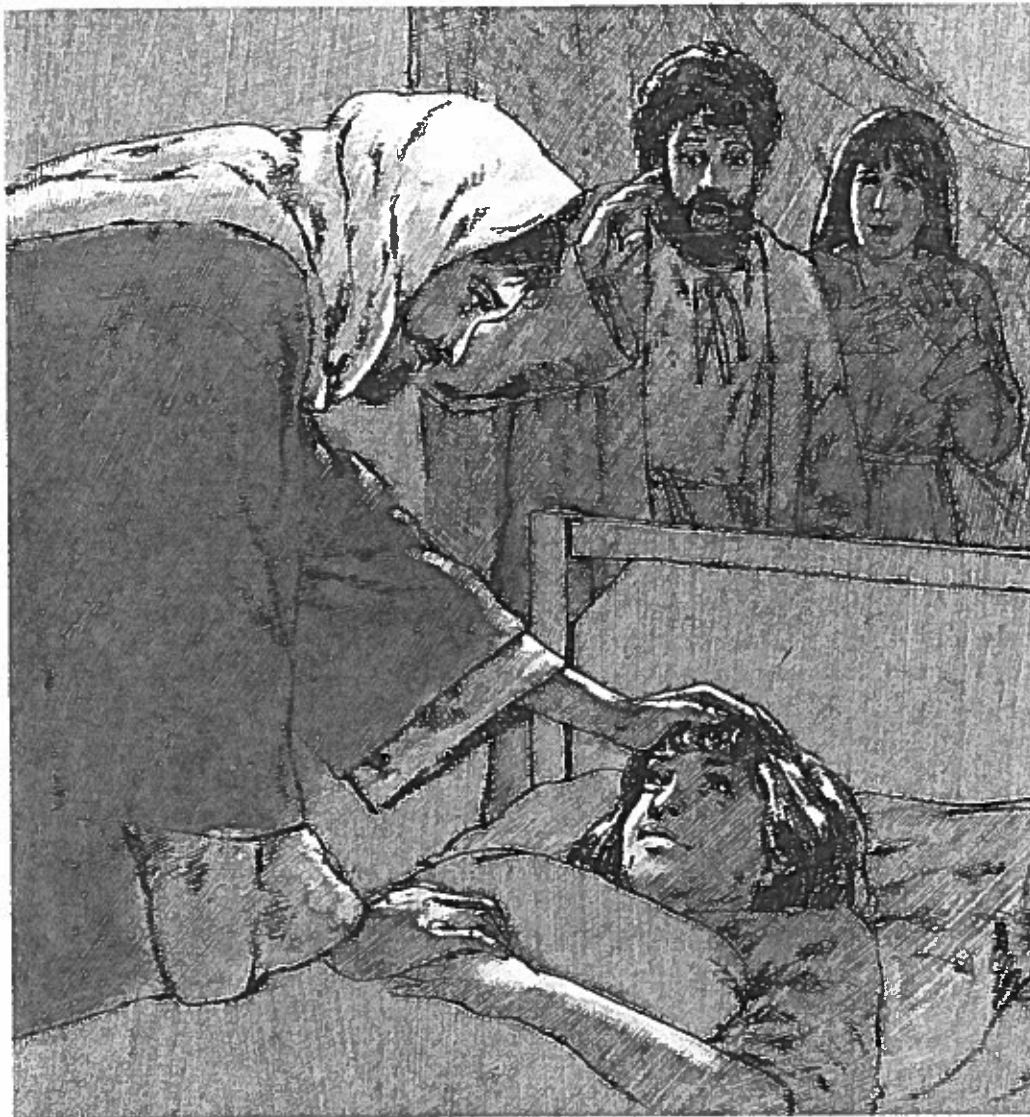
## POWER OVER SICKNESS

Jesus saw many sick people every day. His world was filled with them. Hospitals, medicines, surgery, and other medical technology as we know them did not even exist.

Jesus' day was not much different than ours. Many children then and now did not live to be adults. Infections that began small claimed many lives. People were hungry, malnourished, and without clean drinking water. In many places in the first century A.D., as in the world today, there were people who were sick, those who were blind and deaf, and those who were paralyzed. There was nothing anyone could do. It was to those people that Jesus came with his miraculous good news in a very real way.

Read and compare the following versions of Jesus healing Simon's mother-in-law.

*Miracles were an important part of Jesus' ministry—they announced the coming reign of God.*



**MARK 1:30-31**

Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

1. What does it mean to you that someone had to tell Jesus that she was sick with a fever?

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2. How did Jesus heal her in Mark's story? How did Jesus heal her in Luke's story?

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**LUKE 4:38-39**

Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

3. Luke said that Jesus "rebuked the fever." Elsewhere in the Gospels the word "rebuked" is used when Jesus cast out demons. What connection does Luke's use of that word here make between sickness and the power of demons?

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## POWER OVER DEATH AND NATURE

The third type of miracle showed that Jesus had power over more than sickness. Sometimes Jesus did not know of someone's sickness until after she or he was dead. The stories of the widow's son at Nain, Jairus's daughter, and Lazarus show us that Jesus had power over death as well as sickness.

Sickness and death continue in our world, sometimes to a horrible degree. *In the miracles of healing and raising from the dead, we have a picture of God's kingdom.* God promises to free us from the bondage to sickness and death. Sickness and death do not have the final word, God does.

The fourth kind of miracle Jesus performed in his ministry showed his power over the natural world.

*In the miracles of healing and raising from the dead, we have a picture of God's kingdom.*



- Jesus provided for the daily needs of people when he fed more than 5000 with five loaves of bread and two fish (Luke 9:10-17).
- Jesus saved the disciples when he stilled a storm that threatened to drown them (Mark 4:35-41).
- Jesus came to his disciples in a time of trouble when he walked on the stormy sea (Matthew 14:22-27).
- Jesus showed the dimensions of the kingdom when he filled the fishing nets with 153 fish (John 21:4-14).

Discuss together what it means for you today that Jesus showed his power over Satan, over sickness, over death, and over nature. What kind of God cares for you?

## Shaping life

### GOD'S SUFFERING PEOPLE

If you could change anything in your life, what would it be?

It is easy to find something to complain about, no matter who you are. But if you were to give a serious answer, you might think a while before you spoke. After all, much of life is just fine the way it is for many of us. But for many others life holds permanent, dreadful sorrows that never go away.

Think of a person who is losing a family member to a disease. Think of a family that lives where food is scarce and where shelter and clean water may

### FURTHER

## opportunities

#### Mishna minutes

Memorize Luke 7:22-23. When Jesus performed the miracles of healing and raising people from the dead, people knew that the reign of God had begun. Study the whole story of John the Baptist's question in Luke 7:18-23. Reflect on the evidence that Jesus used to show John's disciples that the reign of God had indeed begun. What does this proof mean for you and for your world today?

#### Activity 1

Ask your pastor for the book *Occasional Services*. In it you will find two short services to be used with people who are sick. One is called Service of the Word for Healing. The other is called Laying on of Hands and Anointing the Sick. Read through these services. Think of what it might mean to you if you were ill and someone from your church came to hold such a service for you. What are some ways you can become

be a luxury. The world is filled with people who endure one kind of sadness or another.

Check the statements that describe what you could do to bring good news to people. Plan to do at least two of them.

- \_\_\_ Pray for them.
- \_\_\_ Plan a hunger awareness program for your congregation.
- \_\_\_ Raise money to build wells in areas where water supplies are contaminated.
- \_\_\_ Write government officials urging legislation to help people in your country and in other nations.
- \_\_\_ Join an organization that works for world peace, justice, and the elimination of hunger.
- \_\_\_ Live your own life in such a way that you are not polluting or abusing natural resources.

involved in the church's ministry to the sick?

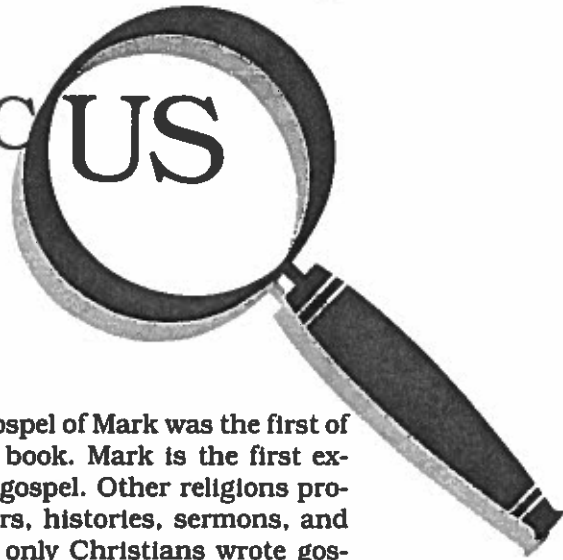
#### Activity 2

Miracles often are associated with prayer. In James 4:20, the writer makes a simple but striking point about prayer. "You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask." Think about the way you pray. How often do you pray and for what? Can you improve in this part of your self-discipline? Remember, when miracles do happen in people's lives, prayer often is the seed from which they grow.

#### Activity 3

Ask your pastor or teacher for the name of a person in your congregation who is in a nursing home or homebound. Go visit that person two or three times during the next month. You may want to share a Bible passage and prayer with him or her.

# FOCUS



## ON MARK

The gospel of Mark was the first of its kind of book. Mark is the first example of a gospel. Other religions produced letters, histories, sermons, and so on, but only Christians wrote gospels.

A gospel is more than a history of Jesus. It is the weaving together of what Jesus said and did and what the writer saw that these words and actions meant.

Before Mark wrote the gospel, there appears to have been no connected story of the ministry or teachings of Jesus. What Mark did was to collect the stories and sayings of Jesus remembered by the people. The largest piece of this remembered material is the story of Jesus' death and resurrection (Mark 14:1—16:8).

"In the gospel of Mark, past, present, and future all flow together. The past of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee and Judea, the present of the ministry of Jesus in and through the church, the future of the ministry Jesus will exercise when he comes as Son of Man all come together in the narrative of Mark's gospel."<sup>\*</sup>

Tradition says that the gospel of Mark was written by John Mark (Acts 12:12; 15:37). It is said that he wrote it in Rome as a summary of Peter's preaching. The date of its writing is probably just before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70.

<sup>\*</sup>Excerpt from *The New Testament: An Introduction* by Norman Perrin, Page 144.