

The Nonbiblical Literary Evidence of Jesus' Miracles

Josephus *Antiquities* 18.63-64 (c. A.D. 36-100)

In all extant MSS of this section of Josephus we read,

“Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, ..., for he was a doer of surprising works...”

In two **Jewish/Rabbinic texts** we read:

“On the eve of Passover Yeshu [Jesus] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, ‘He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy.’” (b. *Sanhedrin* 43^a)

And in another passage: “And a Master [another major rabbi] has said, ‘Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led Israel astray.’” (b. *Sanhedrin* 107^b)

Other texts indicate that any healing activity connected to Jesus or his name were rejected by official Judaism:

The second century **Church Fathers** mention this Jewish position about Jesus:

“They said it was a display of magic art, for they even dared to say that he was a magician and a deceiver of the people.” (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue* 69.7)

NT Eyewitness Evidence For Jesus Christ's Miracles

Blindness

Healing a Blind Man	John 5:1-18
Healing a Blind Man	John 9:1-41
Healing Two Blind Men	Matt 9:27-31
Healing Blind and Mute Demented	Matt 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-23
2 Stage Healing the Blind Man at Bethsaida	Mark 8:22-26
Healing Blind Men at Jericho	Matt 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43

Deaf/Mute

Healing the Man with the Mute Spirit	Matt 9:32-34
Healing Blind and Mute Demented	Matt 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-23
Healing Deaf and Mute Man	Mark 7:31-37

Inability to Walk

Healing of Paralytic Lowered through Roof	Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26
Healing Cripple Woman on Sabbath	Luke 13:10-17

Other Health Items

Healing a Leper	Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16
Healing Peter's Mother-in-Law	Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39
Healing the Bleeding Woman	Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
Healing Man with Withered Hand	Matt 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11
Healing the Man with Dropsy	Luke 14:1-6
Healing the 10 Lepers	Luke 17:11-19
Healing of Malchus's Ear	Luke 22:49-51
Healing a Centurion's Servant	Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
Healing a Nobleman's Son	John 4:46-54

Nature Miracles

Water Into Wine	John 2:1-11
Feeding of the 5000	Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14

Walking on Water	Matt 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-51; John 6:6-21
Calming of the Storm	Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25
Feeding the 4000	Matt 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10
Cursing the Fig Tree	Matt 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-24, 20-24
Full Net of Fish	Luke 5:1-11
Full Net of Fish	John 21:1-14

Exorcisms

Many Demon Possessed Healed	Matt 8:16-17
Casting out Demons among tombs	Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39
Demons from Canaanite Woman's Daughter	Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
Healing Blind and Mute Demoniac	Matt 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30; Luke 11:14-23
Demons from the Boy	Matt 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43
Demons from the man in the Synagogue	Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37

Death

Raising Lazarus	John 11:1-44
Raising Jairus's Daughter	Matt 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56
Raising the Widow of Nain's Son	Luke 7:11-17

How Did Jesus Perform His Miracles? By What Power Were Jesus' Miracles Performed?

1. Jesus only began to do miracles after his Baptism

2. Jesus clearly attributes his miracles to God the Father & God the Holy Spirit

- Luke 11:20 – Finger of God
- John 5:17, 19-20 – Father's Power
- John 11:41 – Father's Power
- John 14:10 – Father's Power
- John 9:3-4 – God, the One who sent Jesus
- Matt 12:28 – The Holy Spirit's Power

3. The eyewitnesses clearly attributes his miracles to God the Father & God the Holy Spirit

- Luke 5:17 – The Holy Spirit's Power
- Acts 2:22 – The Holy Spirit's Power
- Acts 10:38 – The Holy Spirit's Power

4. Potentially Jesus' Power

- Luke 6:19 – Ambiguous
- Luke 8:46; Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48 – Ambiguous
- Matt 9:28 – Jesus' ability to do the miracle

5. Post Ascension Miracles in Jesus' Name

- Acts 3:16
- Acts 4:10
- Acts 9:34

Why Were the Miracles Performed? What were they intended to prove?

Jesus' Explicit Teaching on the Role of Miracles

1. Jesus' miracles link Jesus to the God of the Hebrew Bible

- Luke 11:20
- Exod 8:18-19

2. Jesus' miracles indicate Jesus is fulfilling prophetic expectations regarding the coming Messiah

Luke 4:16-21
Matt 11:2-6
Luke 7:18-23
Isa 35:5
Isa 61:1
Isa 26:19

3. Jesus' miracles indicate the presence of the kingdom of God and dismantling of Satan's rule

Matt 12:28
Luke 11:20
Mark 3:23-27
Matt 10:1, 5-8; Mark 3:13-15; 6:7; Luke 6:12-19; 9:1-6

4. Jesus' miracles indicate the testimony of God the Father and the God the Holy Spirit's approval of Jesus' message

John 5:36
John 8:13-14, 17-18

5. Jesus' miracles indicate Jesus has the authority to forgive sins here on earth

Luke 5:21-25

APPENDIX

The Nonbiblical Literary Evidence of Jesus' Existence

The amount of material that can be traced back to the historical Jesus is far from meager.

Extant Roman Sources

Seutonius (c. A.D. 70 – c. 160); *Claudius* 25.4)

Tacitus (c. A.D. 55 – c. 177; *Annals* 15.44)

Pliny the Younger (A.D. 61 or 62 – c. 113; *Epistles* 10.96-97)

Indirect sources from Thallus through the work of Julius Africanus (*Chronology*, fragment 18) and Peregrinus through the work of Lucian of Samosata (*The Passing of Peregrinus* 11).

Extant Syrian Philosopher

Mara Bar Sarapion alludes to Jesus.

Josephus

Antiquities 18.63-64

Antiquities 20.200

Extant Rabbinic Sources

b. Sanhedrin 43^a and 107^b

Early Church Fathers

Justin Martyr (*Dialogue* 69.7; 108; *First Apology* 30)

Origen (*Contra Celsum* 1.68)

Late Rabbinic and Extracanonical Christian sources that refer to Jesus by name.

For discussions, see Darrell L Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods*, Book (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 43–63; Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Jesus Outside the New Testament: What Is the Evidence?” in *Jesus Under Fire*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 207–229; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, Volume One: 56–166; Bruce M Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*, Book, 3d Revised. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 89–95, 118–122.