

### THE IDENTITY OF JESUS – PART VI

*We have reviewed the witness of fulfilled prophecy and history and the claims of His followers and of Christ Himself. But what of the many miracles attributed to this man from Galilee? Are these but legendary? Or could they be real evidence of the Divine?*

#### MIRACULOUS EVIDENCE

This brings us to another compelling form of evidence for the divinity of Christ, his miracles. As noted by the testimony of Nicodemus, and the attitude of the authorities, the fact that Jesus could perform healings and signs was never challenged by his enemies. Having just witnessed the healing of two blind men and the casting out of a demon from a mute, they were amazed and challenged instead the source of his power. **“Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel...It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”** (Matthew 9:28-33)

Searching the ancient records, it was not unknown for rabbis to be able to perform exorcisms, or even successfully pray for rain. But it was the nature of Christ's miracles that set him apart. As we have seen when he walked on the water and calmed the raging storm, nature itself responded to his commands. The very order of his miracles was greater than any performed by those other Rabbis. Jesus healed the blind and the deaf, caused the lame to walk, multiplied loaves and fish, and raised the dead. Furthermore he did it all on his own authority.<sup>1</sup> But miracles such as these did not go unpredicted. In fact this is just further evidence of Jesus' Messianic identity. In Isaiah 35:5-6 it is written, **“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.”**

These miracles were not questioned at the time. In fact they were among the most important tools used by the Apostles in the early spread of Christianity. In his address to the crowds on the first Pentecost, Peter relied on the very fact that the miracles of Jesus were well known and accepted to make his case. **“Men of Israel, listen to this: 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.”** (Act 2:22) *“As you yourselves know.”* The miracles of the recently crucified Christ could serve as a tool only because they were so widely known and accepted by the populace. Jesus' miracles were not denied by his enemies because they could not be. They were performed in public before believers and non-believers alike. And amazingly they demonstrated a wide mastery over the forces of nature. Jesus not only healed the sick and the lame, but also calmed the storm, fed the multitudes, and raised the dead. His was an overwhelming demonstration of divine power. That is what it was intended to be. Yet those miracles were always performed with an end in mind. Jesus repeatedly refused the demands of the crowds to perform a sign as a form of entertainment or to satisfy their curiosity. In fact such demands for a sign always seemed to come on the heels of some great miracle just performed. In the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew we are told of an exorcism Jesus performed on a man, restoring at the same time his ability to see and to speak. Hearing of this the Pharisees did not question the miracle but instead attacked him for tapping into the power of Beelzebub to cast out demons. Later they demanded a miraculous sign. But Jesus refused to play their game. Instead he rebuked them for the disingenuous of their request. Like the atheist who has determined that no amount of evidence could ever convince him of the possibility of the supernatural, the Pharisees were

impervious to any weight of proof. To admit that Jesus was the Messiah would have challenged their position and undermined their authority.

Miracles were the signs that Christ used to validate his case, demonstrate God's love, and give glory to the Father. They were always an expression of spiritual truth, never to gain the approval of the crowd or any personal advantage.<sup>2</sup>

Now there are critics out there who will claim that the miracles of Jesus were an invention of the Gospel authors. They begin with a totally mechanistic view of nature. Their argument goes something like this; *Miracles are impossible because they violate the laws of nature. The Gospels contain accounts of miracles. Therefore we can't trust the Gospels in this matter. If we can't trust the Gospels then we have no reasonable evidence that the miracles ever occurred.* Of course this is circular reasoning and against the evidence we have for the reliability of the Gospels.<sup>3</sup> Again we know two facts about the existence of miracles. The teachings of Christ, that relied so much upon the reality of the miracles to validate it's message, were being broadcast to the populace less than two months after his execution on the day of Pentecost. Eyewitnesses to the contrary would surely have fatally wounded any effort to spread the new belief. Instead at the very first teaching by the Apostle Peter, three thousand people came to believe in Jesus. This would not have been possible in Jerusalem if the miracles of Christ were not well known. Secondly, Jesus' closest disciples, the witnesses to so many of the wonders, ultimately gave their lives as testimony to the truth of those teachings. They fully believed, and they were in a position to know.

It all comes down to the supremacy of God. If an all-powerful, creator God exists, then miracles become imminently possible. We must follow where the evidence takes us. It has brought us a long way thus far. We have been led to the existence of God by the very real presence of the moral law, and by the very fact of our existence. The unbelievably complex design of our universe and all of its component parts confirm this for us. We have been led to the God of the Bible by the inexorable logic of the existence of evil and sin and the need for atonement that that entails. The demonstrated reliability of that book and the fulfillment of its prophecies have confirmed this. The evidence has taken us to the threshold of the divine. An all-powerful God, existing outside of time and space; one responsible for the creation of the universe with all its natural laws would have no problem with the miraculous. These natural laws are not the problem. To quote Paul Little in *Know Why You Believe*, "Natural laws do not cause anything in the sense that God causes and creates. These are merely descriptions of what we observe to be happening." The problem then lies in the assumptions one brings to the question. If science brings the assumption of naturalism of course it will find no evidence for the miraculous. It would be wrong because it would be passing judgement on a subject outside of its bailiwick. This is true first of all, because natural laws are descriptive and therefore cannot forbid phenomena from occurring. Secondly, because the proposition is that God caused the 'miracle', while operating outside of the natural law, proof that an occurrence violated natural law would just establish that an event was indeed miraculous. It all comes down to the existence of God. If God 'is', by definition the supernatural is possible.<sup>4</sup>

## THE NEXT SIX MONTHS

Economic crystal balls are sometimes the least accurate, but Dr Nouriel Roubini, a professor of economics at NYU may have one that works. Back in September of 2006, he told the International Monetary Fund of a coming crisis in real estate, an “oil shock” and, - in the words of the NY Times; - the “mortgage-backed securities unraveling world wide and the global financial system shuddering to a halt”. He even warned of dire trouble for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Though at first dismissed as pessimistic, in the end, - this is exactly what came to pass. Now last September, with even the doubters listening, he’s warning of an infection that will strike all sectors of the financial world.<sup>5</sup> And he’s not the only one talking that way.

James Quinn of the prestigious Wharton School is hollering that the fuel that drives the world’s economy is drying up. He’s referring to the easy credit that has been the catalyst of American growth since the days of Ronald Reagan. Like Roubini, Quinn sees an “inevitable deep recession” on the horizon. His advice: “The ‘material generation’ needs to dematerialize.”<sup>6</sup> Former chief economist for the IMF Kenneth Rogoff chimes in with the notion that the worst is still on the horizon, saying “the financial crisis is at the halfway point, perhaps”. And he warns us to be on the alert for the collapse of one or two of the really big world banks; - which he doesn’t seem to think is such a bad thing after all, - “The financial system has become very bloated and needed to shrink”.<sup>7</sup> Two of the biggest financial institutions in real trouble right now are Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Warren Buffet told CNBC that the two financial giants have a net worth of zero, which is a real issue for its investors. Those investors include many regional banks; - passing the risk farther down the food chain.<sup>8</sup> Yu Yongding, formerly of China’s central bank, says a Fannie / Freddie failure would be a catastrophe of the first order and “the current international financial system”. China currently holds about \$376 billion of debt in these organizations.<sup>9</sup> That’s serious money. Economists are no longer taking the world’s financial situation lightly.

Now so far the Fed has been dealing with the looming crisis by cutting interest rates to keep the money flowing. In that sense, what is happening now could really be an illusion. Gold is dropping a bit and the dollar is temporarily growing stronger, and many economists are predicting that others among the world’s central banks will follow the Fed’s lead, - and they see danger in that. But those European and Asian banks are paying the price for supporting the dollar in the form of current losses. As they begin to realize that this is a long term losing proposition, they will begin to de-couple from their ties to the American model. With its credit gravy train gone, the dollar will fall to its “natural unsupported level” and the American consumer will lose his ability to conspicuously consume above and beyond his means. It will be a rather painful adjustment.<sup>10</sup> The fact is, as anyone who buys food or fuel knows, - that is already beginning to happen. Even according to Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers, prices are up by 5.6% from July of 2007 to July of 2008. Some economists who look at the real prices, estimate that the annual rise is actually 13%. That’s a huge hit for consumers to take. And they are beginning to take that hit on a very real level. America’s largest food bank network reports that demand for emergency food was 20% above that of last year.<sup>11</sup>

All of this is in fact in line with the predictions of the LEAP 20/20 people that we covered a few issues back. Coming out again with a summer update, they see the next half-year as the “core of the unfolding crisis”. Specifically they look for a collapse of the dollar and the US economy, which strains the global financial system to the breaking point. Those troubles spread to the EU and Asia and Latin America, at the same time that the Iranian nuclear crisis comes to a head, with strikes on the enrichment plants very likely. They believe that the

US will continue to talk up the dollar, but to no lasting affect. It is strictly the last psychological tool Ben Bernake can use to try to keep in place the global financial system that was founded at the end of World War II. The next G-8 meeting will reveal the futility of any attempt to stabilize the US dollar. By then, the world will come to realize that it has little use for the overvalued American currency. Then “the global financial system will burst” with the world’s economy surviving by transforming into “various sub-systems” until a new economic world order can be cobbled together.<sup>12</sup> If that’s how it goes down it will conveniently set the stage for the move toward regional or even a world wide currency to replace the old dollar-based system. Couple that with a conflict in the Middle East over the Iranian nuclear question and you perhaps have the made-to-order chaos necessary for the advancement of the One World cause, - perhaps even for the rise of the Islamic messiah, the Mahdi. It is indeed, a situation worth watching.

## YADAS

**BEHIND THE SCENES** – Seeking to diffuse the worsening tensions between Moscow and Washington, the American and Russian governments are quietly working on setting up a summit between President Bush and Russian Premier Putin. [At least they’ve abandoned the fiction the Russian President Medvedev is anything other than a figurehead that can be ignored when it comes to anything really substantive.] Toward that end, John Beyrle, America’s Ambassador in Moscow, let it be known that the US agreed that Georgia was in the wrong when they fired on Russian troops in South Ossetia and that the Russian response was a legitimate one. At the same time it was intimated that Washington still supports Moscow’s entry into the World Trade Organization. The Ambassador however let it be known that the Russians had gone too far with their ‘punishment’ of Georgia. It was a clear signal that under the right conditions, the two countries could still do business.<sup>13</sup> It is interesting that a fuel train hit a mine then in Georgia, breaking the recently restored main fuel highway to the West.<sup>14</sup> When it comes to energy, Russia holds Europe virtually hostage, supplying about of quarter of Germany’s oil needs and nearly all of Poland’s. Moscow has not been afraid to use that very significant leverage, turning off oil supplies to the EU in the Winter of 2007.<sup>15</sup>

**A VICTORY FOR THE GOOD GUYS** – There’s been yet another success for adult stem cell research, making even less tenable the position that it is necessary to use embryonic stem cells for medical research purposes. So far, as you probably know, embryonic stem cells have produced little in the way of concrete results, while adult stem cells have been successfully applied in many situations. The latest find by Medistem Inc, finds that adult stem cells “can match tissues in the heart, lung, liver, pancreas, blood vessels, brain, muscle, bone and fat”. This latest work is developing techniques that will reverse the need for amputation in many cases by allowing blood vessels to regenerate. This particular stem cell is harvested from a woman’s menstrual cycle, - thereby obviating the need to kill a fetus. Other eventual applications include the treatment of heart, liver and kidney diseases, as well as multiple sclerosis and diabetes.<sup>16</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Lee Strobel, The Case For Christ, Zondervan, 1998, pg 158
  - <sup>2</sup> Paul E Little, Know Why You Believe, Chariot Victor, 1999, pg 93-98
  - <sup>3</sup> Lee Strobel, The Case For Christ, Zondervan, 1998, pg 154-155
  - <sup>4</sup> Paul E Little, Know Why You Believe, Chariot Victor, 1999, pg 90
  - <sup>5</sup> Stephen Mihm, Dr Doom, New York Times Magazine, August 15, 2008
  - <sup>6</sup> James Quinn, The Great Consumer Crash of 2009, Prudent Bear .Com, August 19, 2008
  - <sup>7</sup> Worst of financial crisis is still to come?, UK Telegraph, August 19, 2008
  - <sup>8</sup> Rob K Blake, Warren Buffet Says The 'Game Is Over' for Fannie and Freddie, The Mortgage Insider, August 23, 2008
  - <sup>9</sup> Kevin Hamlin, Freddie, Fannie Failure Could Be World `Catastrophe,' Yu Says, Bloomberg, August 22, 2008
  - <sup>10</sup> Peter Schiff, The Strong Dollar Illusion, Dollar Daze, August 16, 2008
  - <sup>11</sup> Richard Daughy, Profits hit with an ugly stick, Asia Times, August 26, 2008
  - <sup>12</sup> Global Europe Anticipation Bulletin, LEAP 20/20 Summer 2008 Alert, July-December 2008
  - <sup>13</sup> US concedes Kremlin's first military response in Georgia was "legitimate" , DEBKAFfile, August 22, 2008
  - <sup>14</sup> Explosion severs Azerbaijan-Georgia-Europe fuel railway link , DEBKAFfile, August 24, 2008
  - <sup>15</sup> Russian's turn off Europe's oil supply, London Times, January 7, 2008
  - <sup>16</sup> Bob Unruh, Scientific breakthrough! No embryonic stem cells needed, World Net Daily, August 22, 2008