THE MESSAGE OF JESUS I: MIRACLES, CONTINUING CONTROVERSIES

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Controversies surrounding the miracles of Jesus have ebbed and flowed over the last two or more centuries. Dating from the last two decades of the twentieth century, “A Renaissance in Jesus Studies” has involved a renewed interest in the miracles of Jesus. It is not that there has been an accent on the miracle traditions. Rather, the problem of miracle has returned to center stage as one of the dividing lines in present-day Jesus research.


That is, the miracles are being treated more carefully than at any time since the beginning of the scientific study of Jesus. This interest has arisen for a number of reasons: because of the failure to show that miracles originated outside the Jesus tradition; the increased confidence in the historical reliability of the gospel traditions; the increased interest in and knowledge of the milieu in which Jesus lived; the use of social-scientific methods broadening ways of understanding miracles; methodological prudence in not being too hasty in judging what is historically not possible; the general sensitivity


6 Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 281–330, esp. 330, though see, e.g., J. Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York and Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 172, who says that we cannot exclude the possibility that “on occasion a non-Christian legend about an itinerant miracle worker was retold from a Christian point of view.”


