

Ways NOT to read New Testament healing and exorcism stories

1. **AS “MIRACLES”:** the very concept is dependent on a distinction that didn't exist until the Enlightenment: “natural” and “supernatural.” There is no word in biblical Hebrew or Greek for “miracle,” regardless of current English translations.
2. **AS “SCIENTIFICALLY EXPLAINABLE EVENTS”:** the flip side of #1: rendering the biblical language in the categories of today's science and medicine. For example, reading demonic experiences as “epilepsy” or “schizophrenia.”
3. **AS EXAMPLES OF “THE JESUS EXCEPTION”:** as if Jesus had magical powers that distinguish him from “regular” humans, despite the fact that Luke (and other gospels) has Jesus telling/empowering his disciples to do just what he has done.
4. **AS “PROOF OF JESUS'S DIVINITY” OR MESSIAHSHIP:** there is nothing in biblical tradition to suggest that a “son of God” or messiah had healing or other special abilities.
5. **ASSUMING OUR SEPARATE CATEGORIES OF “PHYSICAL CURE” AND “SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE” WITHIN HEALING STORIES:** in Jesus' world, such a boundary would have been very fuzzy, given the social embeddedness of individual lives within extended families, local polities (such as city or village), and religious associations (such as synagogues and, later *ekklēsiai* (churches)).