



The Miracles of Jesus

Lesson 1: Introduction to the Miracles of Jesus

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Easton's Bible Dictionary defines "miracle" as "*An event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God... It is an occurrence at once above nature and above man. It shows the intervention of a power that is not limited by the laws either of matter or of mind, a power interrupting the fixed laws which govern their movements, a supernatural power.*" Thomas Aquinas said that "*Those things are called miracles which are done by Divine agency beyond the order commonly observed in nature.*"

The Bible frequently uses three different words to refer to miracles (Acts 2:22; Hebrews 2:4). Each of these words could be used to refer to the same supernatural event, but each word emphasizes a different aspect of the event.

1. **Miracle or Power** (dunamis) – The cause of a miracle is *supernatural power*.
2. **Wonder** (terasa) – The effect of a miracle is *awe, amazement and wonder*.
3. **Sign** (semeion) – The miracle conveys a message; it *signifies something*.

In order for there to be miracles, three things must be true: First, there must be a God. Second, there must be a God who is willing to directly intervene in earthly affairs. Third, there must be a God who possesses the POWER to control and override natural law.

TRUE MIRACLES VERSUS FALSE SIGNS

Confusing authentic Bible miracles with false signs or non-miraculous events makes it easy to be deceived by modern day fake-healers. It also makes it difficult to appreciate the true significance of Bible miracles. True miracles typically have FIVE dimensions:

1. A true miracle has an UNNATURAL dimension. It is not according to nature.
2. A true miracle has a DIVINE dimension; it says something about the existence, power and purpose of GOD.
3. A true miracle is MORALLY right.
4. A true miracle has a PURPOSE.
5. A true miracle TEACHES.

True miracles have very distinguishing features. They are exceptions to natural law (Matthew 14:26). They produce immediate results (Mark 1:31, 42; 2:12; 5:29; 42). They bring glory to God (Matthew 9:8; 15:11; Luke 7:16).

False signs also have their distinguishing features: They are performed by those who practice lawlessness, by false prophets, and by the "man of sin" (Matthew 7:21; 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12). They are effective on those who "do not receive the love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12; Deuteronomy 13:1-5). They are symbolic of the powerful deception used by the promoters of pagan religion (Revelation 13:11-14; 16:14; 19:20).

False signs can originate from several sources; they may be tricks of magic (Acts 8:9-11), psychosomatic or natural cures, anomalies of nature, special providence (James 5:17-18), or counterfeit satanic signs (Mark 13:22). While we may be impressed or intrigued by such occurrences, we must be clear that they do not rise to the level of divine miracles.

MIRACLES AS EVIDENCE

Miracles along with *fulfilled prophecy* are the two major faith-building components of Christianity (Acts 2:22; John 5:36; 2 Peter 1:19). Rather than seeing Bible miracles as events that must be explained away or apologized for, we need to recognize them as convincing evidence supporting our belief in the truthfulness of the Bible and the deity of Christ. We need to be prepared to defend our faith against all those who would deny or detract from Bible miracles (cf. Acts 26:1-2; Philippians 1:7, 17; 1 Peter 3:15-16)

But it is important to recognize that miracles are not *scientific proof*, and that they cannot be tested by science. Science involves observing repeatable natural phenomena. **Miracles are neither natural nor repeatable.** It has been said that, “Genuine science cannot comment about miracles because they are not today observable...”(Anthony Standon).

Old Testament miracles provide us with help in understanding the significance of the miracles of Jesus. For instance, Moses was given miraculous power **to demonstrate that God had sent him** (Exodus 3:1-7, 10; 4-9). The same point is demonstrated by Miriam’s leprosy, the punishment of Korah, and Aaron’s rod that budded. Joshua’s dividing of the Jordan, Gideon’s tests, and Elijah’s trial on Mt. Carmel are all miraculous events designed to put God’s stamp of approval on His chosen messengers.

Even so, Jesus’ miracles establish that He is the Son of God (Acts 2:22; John 5:36). Jesus performed many other miracles that were not specifically recorded in Scripture (John 20:30-31; 21:25; Matthew 8:16; 15:30), but the forty or so miracles that are recorded provide ample evidence for us to believe that He is indeed “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Their value as evidence is bolstered by the following facts: First, they were performed in many cities and towns in the presence of multitudes. Second, a wide variety of miracles were performed. Third, they could not be explained away even by Jesus’ enemies (John 11:47).

It is interesting that there are references to the miracles of Jesus outside of inspired Scripture. A passage in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus refers to “Jesus” who “wrought surprising feats.” The Jewish Talmud states that, “They hanged Jesus” because “he practiced sorcery.” Justin Martyr, who lived in the first part of the second century, defended Jesus’ miracles against the claim that He performed His mighty works by “magical arts” Such references are not necessary for us to believe in the miracles of Jesus, but they are to be expected in light of the very public and powerful nature of Jesus’ miraculous works.

Before closing these introductory thoughts on divine miracles, it is perhaps worth noting that the miracles of the apostles in Acts were also designed to prove that the message that they preached was from God (Hebrews 2:3-4). That was their effect in the following cases:

- Tongues (Acts 2)
- Healing of Lame man (Acts 3:6-11)
- Samaritans healed (Acts 8:5-17)
- Aeneas healed at Lydda (Acts 9:34-35)
- Dorcas raised at Joppa (Acts 0:36-42)
- Elymas blinded on Cyprus (13:4-13)
- Cripple healed in Lystra (14:8-10)
- “Special” miracles in Ephesus (Acts 19:11)
- Paul shook off snake bite (Acts 28:3-6)
- Father of Publius healed (Acts 28:7-8)

Miracles of Jesus

Recipient	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Water to wine				2:1-11
Official's son				4:46-54
Possessed man		1:21-27	4:33-37	
Peter's in-law	8:14-15	1:29-31	4:38-39	
Many at sunset	8:16-17	1:32-39	4:40-41	
1 st catch of fish			5:1-11	
Leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-15	
Paralytic	9:1-8	2:1-12	5:18-26	
Man at Bethesda				5:1-17
Withered hand	12:9-13	3:1-6	6:6-11	
Crowd in Galilee	4:23-25			
Centurion's son	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Widow's son			7:11-17	
Calms a sea	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
2 demoniacs	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39	
Unclean woman	9:20-22	5:24-34	8:49-56	
Jairus daughter-2	9:23-26	5:35-43	8:49-56	
2 blind men	9:27-31			
Dumb man	9:32-34			
Feeds 5000	14:13-21	6:32-44	9:10-17	6:1-13
Walks on water	14:22-33	6:45-51		6:15-21
Touching clothes	14:34-36	6:53-56		
Crowd in Galilee	9:35			
Few in Nazareth		6:1-6		
Gentile's daughter	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Deaf man		7:31-37		
Multitude	15:29-31			
Feeds 4000	15:32-39	8:1-10		
Epileptic boy	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-42	
Money in fish	17:24-27			
Blind man				9:1-41
Man of Bethsaida		8:22-26		
Stooped woman			13:10-17	
Man with Dropsy			14:1-16	
Lazarus raised				11:1-45
Ten Lepers			17:11-19	
Crowds in Judea	19:1-2			
Bartimaeus	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Many in Jerusalem	21:14			
Tree withered	21:18-22	11:12-24		
Ear of Malchus			22:47-53	18:10-11
Resurrection	28:1-10	16:1-20	24:1-53	20:1-31
2nd catch of fish				21:1-14



Study Questions for Lesson One

1. What is a miracle?
2. What three different words are commonly found in Scripture to refer to miracles?
 - Cite one passage where all three of these words occur.
3. What three things must be true about God in order for miracles to occur?
4. List the five dimensions of miracles covered in this lesson.
5. Give an example of a Bible miracle to illustrate each of the following distinguishing features of true miracles:
 - They are exceptions to natural law
 - They produce immediate results
 - They bring glory to God
6. What kinds of people perform false signs?
 - What kinds of people are most likely to be influenced by false signs?
7. What are some of the sources of false signs? Where do they come from? What is their origin?
8. Name two major faith-building components of Christianity.
9. Why don't miracles serve as *scientific* proof for the truth of the Bible or the deity of Christ?
10. What examples can you give from the Old Testament of God granting miraculous powers in order to put His stamp of approval on His chosen messengers?
11. According to Acts 2:22, how did God the Father attest to Jesus?
12. According to John 5:36, what provides Jesus with a witness to His identity that is even greater than the witness of John the Baptist?
13. Why did John record signs and miracles of Jesus in his gospel? (John 20:30-31)
14. What question did the chief priests and Pharisees ponder concerning Jesus in John 11:47?
15. How did God bear witness to the message of Jesus and the apostles? (Hebrews 2:3-4)
16. About how many miracles of Jesus are recorded in Scripture?