

**CRITICAL
REFLECTIONS
ON
MIRACLES**

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INTRODUCTION

The discussion on miracles is a very interesting study and it promises to challenge your intellect and force you to reason beyond what you had known.

The short study intends to look at Miracles from a critical angle.

A little dose of thoughts from Wayne Jackson was blended to make the work rich.

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DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF MIRACLES

How does one define a miracle?

A miracle is an event which the forces of nature—including the natural powers of man—cannot of themselves produce, and which must, therefore, be referred to a supernatural agency (Fisher 1900, 9).

A miracle is a divine operation that transcends what is normally perceived as natural law; it cannot be explained upon any natural basis.

The miracles recorded in the Bible fall into several categories. The following examples are illustrative, though certainly not exhaustive:

First, there are supernatural acts of creation. Certain creation activities were accomplished by the word of God (Hebrews 11:3); he merely spoke, and it was done (Psalm 33:9). Obviously, this type of divine action is not being duplicated today since the creation process of the material universe was concluded at the end of the initial week of earth's history (Genesis 2:1-2).

Second, there were miracles which involved a temporary and localized suspension of laws regulating nature. Jesus calmed a ferocious storm on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27), and, on another occasion, he walked upon the waters of the lake (John 6:16-21).

Third, there were signs which involved the healing of man's physical body. The blind were made to see (John 9:1-7), and the lame to walk (Acts 3:1-10).

Fourth, there were signs demonstrating divine power over death. Lazarus, dead four days, was raised (John 11:43-44), and, of course, the resurrection of Christ is the very foundation of the Christian system (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).

Fifth, some of the wonders of the New Testament age had to do with the expulsion of demons that had entered into human bodies (Matthew 12:22ff). This was evidence of the fact that the Savior's power was superior to that of Satan.

Sixth, the exhibition of divine authority was seen in the manipulation of certain material things. Christ turned water into wine (John 2:1-11), and multiplied a lad's loaves and fishes, so that thousands were fed (John 6:1-14).

Seventh, miraculous power was demonstrated in both the plant and animal kingdoms. Balaam's donkey spoke with a man's voice (Numbers 22:28), and the Lord Jesus, in an object lesson relative to the impending destruction of Jerusalem, destroyed a fig tree with but a word from his mouth (Matthew 21:19).

SUMMARY

- God is the owner of miracles
- Man is the messenger through which he executes his miracles
- His miracles cover all units of life, plants, animals, humans and nature.
- The messenger must not see himself above the owner of the message.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GENUINE MIRACLE

What are the traits of a genuine miracle, as opposed to feigned signs? Consider the following facts.

Miracles either happen, or they don't. When Jesus performed signs, even his enemies did not deny the effect of such; they merely attempted to attribute his power to some other source (e.g., Satan; cf. Matthew 12:24). The leaders of the Jewish community did not doubt that Peter and John had performed a notable miracle when they healed the lame man at the temple; rather, they sought to mute the sign's impact by threats of violence (cf. Acts 4:14ff). Is anything being done today of such compelling nature as to elicit this type of reaction?

In biblical times, miracles always had a **worthy motive**. Signs were not done for the purpose of personal aggrandizement. Though Jesus' miracles established the validity of his claim of being the Son of God, that designation was not assumed out of personal interest. Rather, the documented claim was motivated by a love for man's salvation.

Those performing wonders in the first century did not do so for the purpose of enhancing themselves financially—unlike the wealthy “faith-healers” of today. When Peter encountered the lame man of Acts 3, he had no money (v. 6).

As a general rule, the miracles of the Bible era were done in the presence of a multitude of **credible witnesses**—even hostile observers. When the Lord multiplied the loaves and fishes, possibly some ten thousand or more people were present (cf. John 6:10ff). Truly, the signs validating Christianity were not “done in a corner” (Acts 26:26).

Genuine miracles were not slow, progressive processes; rather, they produced **instantaneous effects**. Note: “[A]nd straightway he received his sight” (Mark 10:52); “[A]nd immediately his feet and his ankle bones received strength” (Acts 3:7).

In the New Testament, one never reads such statements as this: “Paul prayed for him, and within three weeks he was cured.” Yet, such testimonies are common among the devotees of modern charlatans.

True miracles must be subject to **sense perception**. The water that Jesus turned into wine could be tasted (John 2:9); Thomas could feel the prints in the hands of the resurrected Christ (John 20:27), and the restored ear of the high priest's servant could be seen (Luke 22:51). The wonders of the Bible were objective demonstrations, not subjective speculations!

Actual signs must be **independent of secondary causes**. By this we mean there must be no possible way to explain the miracle in a natural fashion.

Can the miracles of Christ be explained in any natural fashion? They cannot. For instance it cannot be argued that the blind man of John 9:1ff was psychosomatically afflicted, for the gentleman had been born in that condition. How can a perfectly restored ear, that had been amputated, be explained by current processes (Luke 22:50-51)?

A genuine miracle will generate more than a **superficial and temporary interest**. It will have an abiding effect. The miracles of Christ were never denied during the apostolic age, nor even in the immediate ages beyond.

Even ancient enemies of Christianity, like Celsus and Porphyry, admitted that Jesus did certain extraordinary deeds; they suggested, of course, that it was mere “magic.” Their charges, however, are indirect testimony to

the supernatural works of Christ. We submit, therefore, that so-called modern miracles do not meet the criteria suggested above. They thus must be rejected and explained upon some other basis.

CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUS MIRACLES

Now our attention will be focused on Jesus and his style of miracles. A good start is to examine the characteristics of his miracles as littered in the gospel accounts of Matthew Mark and Luke.

1. There were situational. Not planned or days fixed for miracles. Matt 17:24-27
2. The result was immediate. When Peter removed the ears of the High priest servant with a sword, Jesus replaced it immediately. Luke 22:50-51
3. Some were done as a response to the faith of the individual. The woman with the issue of blood is a very good example. Matt 9:20-22; 28-29
4. Some had no single faith at all yet got their miracle. Lazarus is a solid example. John 11:35-45
5. Jesus miracles were open to all and subject to verification. There was even a time the scribes had to interview the parents of the one healed. John 9:18
6. He was a mobile miracle working person. He was not confined to one location as we see today.
7. Jesus miracles were simply amazing. How can anyone explain his speaking to the waves obey him or his walking on the see or the feeding of 5000 with insignificant items. Matt 14:13-21
8. Jesus miracles had no problems with distance. He could heal a person not even where he was at that material time. Matt 8:5-14

Let us shine our eyes lest we are carried away from the faith. Faith cometh by hearing the word Rom 10:17 and not by miracles.

THE MIRACLES OF PETER

Next we want to look critically at one of Jesus apostles known as Peter to see if his miracles resemble that of the master or there is a sharp difference as we see today.

Peter has three miracles to his credit in the entire book of Acts of the Apostles. The first being the healing of the man at the temple gate Act 3:1-8, the healing of the man with palsy Act 9:32-34 and the raising of Dorcas back to life Act 9:35-43.

From those miracles we can draw the following

1. There were done in the name of Jesus. It was Jesus who did the miracles through his servant.
2. There were situational. Not planned or days fixed for miracles. Act 3:1-8
3. The result was immediate. Dorcas woke up immediately. Act 9:40
4. The man at the temple gate, the man with palsy and Dorcas had no single faith at all yet got their miracle.
5. The miracles were open to all and subject to verification. Act 3:9-10. Act 4:16

Faith does not come because a miracle is done. Faith is generated when the word of God is proclaimed by serious minded men of God. Rom 10:17.

Peter did not fix days for miracle service as we see today.

Peter did not elevate himself above his master and even above his fellow man as we see “men of God” today being worshipped by their followers. No wonder a write said these men are now “gods of men”.

Miracles were not the principal duty of Peter as we see today.

THE MIRACLES OF PAUL

Like we did with Peter, we want to look critically at one of Jesus apostles known as Paul who was arrested to the kingdom of Christ on his way to Damascus to arrest people in the way, to see if his miracles resemble that of the master or there is a sharp difference as we see today.

Paul performed a lot of miracles and can be found in the following chapters and verses of the book of Acts of the Apostles.

Paul heals a cripple	Lystra 14:8-10
Paul casts out a spirit of divination	Philippi 16:16-18
Paul and Silas's prison doors opened by an earthquake	Philippi 16:25, 26
Paul communicates the Holy Spirit	Corinth 19:1-6
Paul heals multitudes	Corinth 19:11, 12
Paul restores Eutychus to life	Troas 20:9-12
Paul shakes off a viper	Malta 28:3-6
Paul heals the father of Publius and others	Malta 28:7-9

From those miracles we are safe to draw the following conclusion

1. There were done in the name of Jesus. It was Jesus who did the miracles through his servant.
2. There were situational. Not planned or days fixed for miracles. Act 28:3-6
3. The result was immediate. Eutycus woke up immediately. Act 20:9-12
4. Pablius and others did not need to have faith to get their miracle. Act 28:7-9
5. The miracles were open to all and subject to verification. Act 14:11

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CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN DAY MIRACLES

The study will not be complete if we don't take a critical study of the characteristics of modern day miracles.

- The definition of miracles is weakened to accommodate any healing, Spiritual or physical that take place.
- Miracles are planned.
- Miracles are advertised on bill board.
- Interested members of the public are invited to “come for their miracles”.
- A venue for the miracles is announced.
- Several prayers and incantations are made “in the name of Jesus”.
- Those desiring a miracle are told to come out and line up.
- Sometimes, the man of God will push them to fall and roll on the ground or just wave his hand and the people begin to fall.

- Those who remain unmoved are told to have a “stubborn faith”.
- Those “healed” come out to confess and testify about the goodness of God and the man of God.
- Those not healed are accused of not having sufficient faith.
- A recording of the miracle service is produced and sold as a proof of the powers of the man of God.
- Some rich “men of God” employ Information and Communication technology to broadcast their miraculous prowess to the whole world.
- Poor addresses of those healed make it difficult to verify their claim to receiving a miracle.
- Those whose problems are seen to be much are given a “programme” or an “assignment” with ritual-like activities involving reading the psalms and certain incantation. When the “programme is over, the person is declared healed.
- The miracle worker is unconsciously taken more seriously than God and his word. Even if he says something contrary to God’s word or misapplies scriptures. The people are not worried so long as the miracles will flow.

Any miracle today that does not follow the pattern seen in the scriptures is a product of the devil. The bible is aware there will be counterfeit miracles.

Mt 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

2Th 2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

THE MIRACLE OF RESTORING THE EAR OF THE HIGH PRIEST SERVANT

Lu 22:50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. 51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

This miracle of Jesus is rarely discussed probably because of its brevity.

Jesus here restored the ear of a man that has been cut off by one of his disciples. John gave the name of the disciple as Peter and the name of the one whose ear was cut off as Malchus.

Joh 18:10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

1. Firstly the miracle was unplanned.
2. Secondly the one healed was an enemy from the opposite camp coming to capture Jesus obviously.
3. Thirdly He does not have faith that Jesus is lord and can heal him.
4. Lastly it was at that same instance.

THREE QUICK LESSONS FROM THIS MIRACLE

1. The kingdom of heaven is not associated with violence.

Mt 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Peter must have mistaken the true meaning of this passage and acted on it literally

2. Christians must learn to forgive their enemies even though it is hard to do. That was a perfect example of healing a man who came to inflict emotional pain on you.
3. Help your enemy if there are in need. *Ro 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Jesus truly cares for us all. The rain falls on both the good and the bad.

5 THINGS JESUS DID NOT DO WHEN PERFORMING A MIRACLE

1. He did not push the individual to fall first.
2. He did not fix a date that he will do a miracle.
3. He did not ask the audience to sow seed.
4. He did not pray and the person got healed after some days.
5. He did not sort out those he will heal and those he will not.

What we see today is a far cry from what we read from the bible. I think someone is being deceived.

THE POWER TO HEAL

Healing is the exclusive reserve of God

[Jeremiah 33:6 - Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.](#)

[Jeremiah 17:14 - Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou \[art\] my praise.](#)

He promised his children healing

Mal 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

[Isaiah 54:17 - No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue \[that\] shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This \[is\] the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness \[is\] of me, saith the LORD.](#)

Man is the tool which God uses to wroth healing

[Acts 4:10 - Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, \[even\] by him doth this man stand here before you whole.](#)

The one healing is not the owner of the power

[Acts 10:38 - How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.](#)

True healing can only take place if the owner of the healing so desire to release it upon his children

Christians today should expect healing

[James 5:14 - Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:](#)

[James 5:15 - And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.](#)

[1 Peter 2:24 - Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.](#)

But it not compulsory that it must come

[James 5:16 - Confess \[your\] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.](#)

SUMMARY

God has empowered man to heal his fellow man through effective prayers of the one that has faith. After prayers, it is left to God to decide what to do. We cannot twist God's hand to make him heal us.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

God is the owner of all powers and wisdom. We give him all the glory. He has done so much miracles that we should trust him.

What people call miracles today does not resemble any miracles within the pages of the scriptures.

God knows what to do to any man he so wishes as man cannot limit him.

Faith comes by hearing and not by miracles.