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Miracles of the Bible

An Introduction

Introduction

Many miraculous events are reported throughout the Bible. These events present a wonderful display of God's power and His willingness to intervene, to assist, to bless, to guide, to deliver, and to empower human beings to accomplish His work. In this study we will be focusing on the miracles that surround the events of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. A miracle is some wonderful, unusual event or experience that is unmistakably beyond human ability. Miracles produce surprise and awe in those who witness and/or experience them. A dictionary definition of a miracle is an event or effect in the physical world deviating from the known laws of nature, or transcending our knowledge of these laws; an extraordinary, anomalous, or abnormal event brought about by the will, power, and purposes of God. *Unger's Bible Dictionary* gives a biblical definition of a miracle as "supernatural manifestations of divine power in the external world, in themselves special revelations of the presence and power of God; and in connection with other special revelations to which they are subservient, as aiding in their attestation, establishment, and preservation," see Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1981, p. 747.

In the Bible, miracles are a significant part of God's revelation to human beings. They are events that reveal to human agents the character, power, and willful intention of God. In his book, *All the Miracles of the Bible*, Herbert Lockyer categorizes miracles in both the Old and New Testaments. These categories are extensive with subsections. One example is his review of the plagues of the book of Revelation, which has a subsection of at least thirty-eight miracles associated with the plagues. In all, Lockyer's work reviews more than 500 miraculous events found in the Old and New Testaments.

Miraculous Words

Any study of miracles must first take into account the basic descriptive terms in Scripture that are used to identify miraculous phenomenon. There are at least three terms that describe the miraculous; signs, wonders, and mighty works. **First**, the word *sign* is a translation of the Hebrew word *'oth*, and the Greek word *samaion*. Signs were often given to confirm a revelation from God. When Cain killed his brother, he feared that someone might try to kill him as an act of revenge. God gave Cain a *sign* to confirm God's intention to protect him, see Gen

4:15. We do not know what *sign* was given to him. The word translated "mark" is an incorrect translation. The word is *'oth* and the translation should be, "God set a *sign* before Cain . . ." to confirm His promise of protection. At the birth of Jesus, the angels gave the shepherds a *sign*, a baby in a manger, to confirm their miraculous revelation of the birth of the Savior, see Luke 2:11-12. The apostles were given the ability to perform miracles as *signs* of their office as representatives of the Messiah and God the Father, 2 Cor 12:12.

Second, the word translated as *wonder*, *wondrous*, or *wonderful*, is the Hebrew *pele'*, and in Greek *terata*. These words refer to a supernatural omen, a marvel, or a miracle. They often appear in conjunction with two other terms, *signs* and *mighty deeds*, see Deut 13:1; Jer 32:21; Dan 4:3; 6:27; Matt 21:15; Acts 14:3; Rom 15:19; 2 cor 12:12; Heb 2:4. Isaiah's revelation of the Messiah in 9:6 used the Hebrew *pele'* in the title, *Wonderful Counselor*. It literally means a "miraculous" or a "miracle working counselor." In most translations there is a comma after "wonderful." However, there are no marks of punctuation in Hebrew so the comma was incorrectly added. Note that in Isaiah 9:6 there are four double names for the Messiah of which "Miracle Working Counselor" is the first. In Psalm 139:14 the same Hebrew word is used and states, "I will praise you because I am fearfully and miraculously your miracle which you have made." Literally, it says "I am miraculously and continuously being your miracle that you have made." A synonym to *pele'* is the Hebrew *mopeth* translated as "wonders," in Exodus 4:21 and 11:9-10; "miracle" in 7:3.

Third, the words *mighty deeds*, *mighty works*, or *powers* is the Hebrew *gaber* and the Greek *dunamis*. Both are translated *mighty works* or *powerful works*. An associated word is the generic name for God, *Elohim*, which is a plural form of the word *El* which means power in the sense of omnipotence, "all powerful," and "power" beyond compare, see Psalm 50:1 where *El* refers to Yahweh. For such a God, performing miracles presents no problem at all. The most prominent word in the Old Testament is *gibbor* derived from the word *gaber*. It is used by the prophets in reference to God, see Isa 9:6; 10:21; Jer 20:11; 32:18; Zeph 3:17, and in Ps 106:2, 8; 145:4, 12. In the New Testament *dunamis* conveys the idea of God's power and the power of the Lord Jesus, see Matt 11:10-13; 13:54, 58; Mark 6:2, 5, 14; Luke 10:13; 19:37. Miracles also were associated with the apostles, Acts 14:3, 8-10; 15:12; 19:11-12; 28:4-6; 2 Cor 12:12.

Purposes of Miracles

The Bible reveals at least thirteen purposes in the plan of God for the use of miracles including the following:

1. Miracles are concrete evidence of the existence of God. The miraculous defies the law of coincidence. Miracles in Scripture defy the laws of coincidence. For example, at the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14:21-31, the person of God was not visible, but the miraculous events before, during, and after the crossing of the sea gave evidence that He was there assisting the Hebrews to escape the advancing armies of Pharaoh. He was present in the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, Exod 13:20-22.
2. Miracles reveal the presence, power, and glory of God, Judg 6:11-24.
3. Miracles are an integral part of the Bible and even the Scriptures were miraculously revealed by God to the prophets, disciples, and other writers of the Bible, see 2 Pet 1:16-21.
4. Miracles, from His birth to His death, authenticated Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, see Matt 11:4-6; John 2:11; 11:41-45; 14:10-11; Acts 2:20; 10:34-43.
5. Miracles prove Jesus had command over nature and over the human body and soul, see Matt 14:22-32; Mark 6:45-52; Luke 8:41-56; Heb 2:1-4.
6. Miracles confirmed the power of Christ over the spirit world especially over demons. In Matthew 8:28-34, Jesus cast demons from two demon-possessed men. At the request of the demons, He cast them into a herd of swine, and they perished.
7. Miracles also authenticated the ministry of Moses, and the ministries of Elijah and Elisha as men of God, see Exod 2:1-24:18; 1 Kgs 17:1-2 Kgs 2:1-9:3; 13:14-21. Miracles also authenticated the ministry of the apostles, Acts 3:1-9; 15:12; 2 Cor 12:12.
8. Miracles represent God's willingness and His delight to bestow upon us the physical and spiritual blessings that are themselves the emblems of His redeeming grace. While redemption comes from the grace of God, His blessings are a result of obedience, see Deut 28:1-2; Ps 1:1; 32:2; 33:12; 41:1; 106:3; 118:26; 128:4; Mal 3:10; Matt 5:1-12; John 9:1-41; Luke 19:1-10.
9. Miracles impart both physical and spiritual blessings from God to human beings, see Matt 8:5-13; John 9:1-12; Luke 17:14-19.
10. Miracles were signs that brought forth faith in God and Jesus Christ in many of those who witnessed them, Matt 9:22; 15:28; Luke 7:9; 1 Cor 15:12-21.
11. Miracles affirm the power of Jesus over death and hell, see Mark 5:21-43; John 5:16-23; John 11:17-44; 1 Cor 15:1-11, 20-34.
12. Miracles authenticate the Gospel, Rom 15:18-19; Acts 5:12-16; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 15:1-34.

Miracles also are associated with prayer and come in response to God's answer to prayer. Elijah prayed and God sent an awesome display of fire that fell on the prophet's offering. This event occurred in the sight of all the people and was an

affirmation of his role as God's representative against the prophets of Baal, see 1 Kgs 18:24, 36-39. He also prayed for God to restore the life of the son of the widow of Zarephath, 1 Kgs 17:21-23.

God uses human agents to perform some miracles as he did with Elijah in 1 Kgs 17:8-24. God uses animals to perform some miracles as He did when the donkey spoke to Balaam in Numb 22:21-35. God uses angels to perform some miracles as He did with the defeat of the Syrians in 2 Kgs 6:8-23. God uses the Holy Spirit to perform miracles, see Matt 12:28. God used Jesus during His earthly ministry to perform many miracles, Matt 10:1. We also know from Scripture that some miracles are performed directly by God, Exod 7:14-12:42.

In the early days of the church, the apostles performed miracles. These miracles gave a confirmation of the Gospel, as well as the apostles as God's messengers to those who witnessed them, see e.g. Acts 2:43; 3:6-10; 8:6-8, 13; 9:40-42; 1 Cor 12:10, 28-29; Gal 3:5. There is a concentration of miracles associated with the apostles of Jesus as reported in Acts 5:12-16. These miracles were considered to be one of the authenticating signs of apostleship. Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, pp. 363-364, identifies nine signs from 2 Corinthians that were the marks of a true apostle of Jesus. The first of those is supernatural spiritual power in confronting evil, 2 Cor 10:3-4, 8-11; 13:2-4, 10. Second, the true apostles had a focus on the physical and spiritual welfare of the churches, 11:1-6. Third, the true apostles had firsthand knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, 11:4-6. Fourth, the true apostles did not covet financial support from the churches, 11:7-11. Fifth, the true apostles did not take advantage of the churches, 11:9-12. Sixth, true apostles were willing to suffer and endure hardship to present the truths of the Gospel, 11:22-33. Seventh, true apostles had supernatural access to the things of God, Matt 17:1-13; 2 Cor 12:1-6. Eighth, a true apostle had contentment, comfort, and faith in the midst of personal physical pain, 12:7-10. Ninth, true apostles were given the ability to present "signs and wonders" as a confirmation of the Gospel and of their call from God, 12:11-13.

Beware of Counterfeit Miracles

Satan and his demons possess limited supernatural powers. Therefore they can sometimes imitate legitimate miracles from God, see 2 Cor 11:13-14. In the time of Moses, the magicians of Pharaoh's court imitated some of his miracles, Exod 4:1-5 & 7:11-22; 8:7; 9:11. But they were unable to duplicate all of the miracles, see the miracle of the lice, 8:18-19; 9:11, and all other remaining miracles, 9:13-12:24.

False religions are filled with counterfeit miracles by the limited powers of Satan and his minions, Deut 13:1-3. Sometimes miracles are not miracles at all, but events that are staged to look like suspension of the supernatural such as seen in magic shows today. Saul encountered the Witch of Endor who really did not expect the

real dead Samuel to come before Saul, so she cried with horror when Samuel appeared, 1 Sam 28:9-12. The New Testament also warns of false prophets and false messiahs in the latter days, Matt 7:22-23; 24:24. These are signs of apostasy and signs of the end times, see Thess 2:3, 9; Rev 13:13; 19:20.

Do Miracles Continue?

There is a debate in our day as to whether miracles continue or whether all miracles have ceased. Based on the definition of miracle as a supernatural intervention in the normal course of the natural laws of the universe, one can make a case that miracles do occur. It is true, for example, that there are cases of miraculous healing which I personally have witnessed within my own family. When asked if I believe in faith healing or divine intervention to effect healing, the answer is yes. But, I am like the fellow who once said, "I believe in faith healing, but I don't believe in faith healers." Most of us are aware of those who make a spectacle out of "faith healing" services in churches and on television. Many of those who promote themselves in this regard want us to believe that they have a hotline to heaven and have been granted powers to heal at will. If this is true, they indeed are egregiously behaving in a sinful manner by leaving all those who suffer in the hospitals at this very moment. If they have the gift of healing, why don't they empty the hospitals?

One of the greatest purposes served by the miracles in the Bible was that of authentication. They authenticated the ministry of Moses, of Elijah, of Elisha, and of Jesus. The necessity for this kind of authentication no longer exists. After the days of the apostles, there is no legitimate evidence of miracle workers. There are some denominations that want us to believe that individuals can rise to the spiritual level of being able to perform miracles while alive or even after their death. But there is no biblical evidence to sustain the sign of miracles beyond the life and ministry of Jesus and in the days of the early church leaders. Those who point to the passage in Mark 16:17-18 fail to recognize that the older manuscripts that have come to light do not contain these two verses. This raises the question whether someone may have added them at a later time. Because of this, it would be tenuous to base a major doctrine on these two verses alone without further corroboration of the New Testament as a whole.

Do miracles continue today? Yes, God does grant us answers to prayer that many times produces miraculous results. Miracles are an essential part of the Christian life. Are there individuals who are miracle workers today? There is no biblical evidence to indicate that we have anyone of the caliber of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, Paul, or Jesus who is a living miracle worker today! The craving for the spectacle of miracles today may not come so much from the dynamic of faith, as it does from a lack of faith. Jesus could do no mighty work in Nazareth because of

the lack of faith in Him as Messiah as stated in Matt 13:53-58. Jesus rebuked His disciples after the transfiguration for the same reason, Matt 17:19-21. He also gave them a final rebuke for their unbelief just before His ascension as recorded in Mark 16:14.

Should we seek miracles by asking God to perform them today? Biblical evidence reveals that whether we should seek miracles or not depends on our own motive for seeking the supernatural. Remember the case of Simon, the magician, who wanted the ability to perform the miraculous for personal gain. He was rebuked by Peter and commended to the judgment of God, Acts 8:14-25. There is nothing inherently wrong in praying for a miracle of God in our own life or in the lives of others. The desire to have a miracle must be balanced with the will of God, as well as our own obedience, see Matt 13:53-58.

Old Testament Miracles

Miracles are not a phenomenon of the New Testament alone. The Bible opens in Genesis 1 by presenting for us the miracle of creation. Enoch was miraculously translated by God, Gen 5:24. The deliverance of Noah and the destruction of civilization by flood was a miracle of God's judgment, Gen 6:1-9:17. Then are the confusion of tongues at Babel, Gen 11:3-9; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen 19:24; Lot's wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt, Gen 19:26; the donkey who spoke to Baalam, Numb 22:21-35, to name a few.

Many of the miracles center around individuals in the Old Testament. Note the following:

Moses and Aaron

1. The burning bush - Exod 3:3
2. Moses' rod/serpent - Exod 4:3-4, 30; 7:8-10
3. Moses' leprous hand - Exod 4:6-7, 30
4. River becomes blood - Exod 7:20-25
5. Plague of frogs - Exod 8:1-15
6. Plague of lice - Exod 8:16-19
7. Plague of flies - Exod 8:20-24
8. Plague on cattle - Exod 9:1-7
9. Plague of boils - Exod 9:8-12
10. Plague of locusts - Exod 10:1-20
11. Plague of darkness - Exod 10:21-23
12. Death of the firstborn - Exod 12:29-30
13. Pillar of cloud/fire - Exod 13:21-22; 14:19-20
14. Red Sea crossing - Exod 14:21-23
15. Marah made sweet - Exod 15:25

16. Manna sent from heaven - Exod 16:13-36
17. Water from rock at Rephidim - Exod 17:5-8
18. Amalek defeated - Exod 17:9-13
19. Tabernacle cloud & glory - Exod 40:34-38
20. Fire on Aaron's offering - Lev 9:24
21. Strange fire/Nadab & Abihu - Lev 10:1-7
22. Judgment of fire on Israel - Numb 11:1-3
23. Miriam's leprosy - Numb 12:10-15
24. Destruction of Korah - Numb 16:31-35
25. Aaron's rod buds - Numb 17:8
26. Water from the rock in Kadesh - Numb 20:8-11
27. Brazen serpent - Numb 21:9

Joshua

1. Waters of Jordan divide - Josh 3:14-17
2. Fall of Jericho - Josh 6:6-20
3. Sun & moon stand still - Josh 10:12-14

Samson

1. Lion killed - Judg 14:5-6
2. Philistines defeated - Judg 14:19
3. Water supplied - Judg 15:19
4. Gates carried away - Judg 16:3
5. Dagon Temple destroyed - Judg 16:29-30

Elijah

1. Drought predicted - 1 Kgs 17:1
2. Fed by ravens - 1 Kgs 17:4-6
3. Widow's oil/flour increased - 1 Kgs 17:8-16
4. Widow's son raised from dead - 1 Kgs 17:17-23
5. Altar/sacrifice consumed by fire - 1 Kgs 18:38
6. Rain restored - 1 Kgs 18:41
7. "Captains" destroyed by fire - 2 Kgs 1:9-12
8. Jordan divided - 2 Kgs 2:8
9. Elijah swept away on chariot - 2 Kgs 2:11

Elisha

1. Jordan divided - 2 Kgs 2:14
2. Waters of Jericho healed - 2 Kgs 2:20-22
3. Mocking young men judged - 2 Kgs 2:24
4. Water supplied by Jehoshaphat - 2 Kgs 3:16-20
5. Widow's oil multiplied - 2 Kgs 4:1-7

6. Shunammite's child raised from dead - 2 Kgs 4:19-37
7. Poisoned pottage made harmless - 2 Kgs 4:38-41
8. Hundred fed with twenty loaves - 2 Kgs 4:42-44
9. Naaman's leprosy cured - 2 Kgs 5:10-14
10. Gehazi struck with leprosy - 2 Kgs 5:27
11. Axe-head floats - 2 Kgs 6:5-7
12. Ben-hadad's plans revealed - 2 Kgs 6:8-13
13. Syrian army defeated - 2 Kgs 6:18-20
14. Resurrection of man by touch with Elisha's bones - 2 Kgs 13:21

Isaiah

1. Hezekiah healed - 2 Kgs 20:7
2. Shadow returned to sun dial - 2 Kgs 20:11

Other Old Testament Miracles

1. Dew on Gideon's fleece - Judg 6:37-40
2. Dagon's fall before the ark - 1 Sam 5:1-12
3. Men of Beth-shemesh destroyed - 1 Sam 6:6,7
4. Thunder and rain in harvest - 1 Sam 12:18
5. Uzzah's death - 2 Sam 6:6,7
6. Jeroboam's hand withered and restored - 1 Kgs 13:4-6
7. Rending of the altar - 1 Kgs 13:5
8. Sennacherib's army destroyed - 2 Kgs 19:35
9. Uzziah afflicted with leprosy - 2 Chr 26:16-21
10. Three men delivered from the fiery furnace - Dan 3:19-27
11. Daniel delivered from the lion's den - Dan 6:16-23
12. Preservation of Jonah in fish's belly - Jonah 2:1-10

New Testament Miracles

Miracles of Jesus

1. Water made wine (Cana) - John 2:1-11
2. Nobleman's son healed (Cana) - John 4:46-54
3. Passed unseen through crowd (Nazareth) - Luke 4:28-30
4. Demoniac in synagogue cured (Capernaum) - Mark 1:23-26; Luke 4:33-35
5. Peter's mother-in-law healed (Capernaum) - Matt 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39
6. Draught of fishes - Luke 5:1-11
7. Leper cleansed (Capernaum) - Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-15
8. Paralytic cured (Capernaum) - Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26
9. Impotent man healed (Jerusalem) - John 5:1-9
10. Withered hand restored (Galilee) - Matt 12:10-13; Mark 3:1-5; Luke 6:6-11

11. Centurion's servant cured of palsy (Capernaum) - Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10
12. Widow's son raised from dead (Nain) - Luke 7:11-17
13. Demoniac healed (Galilee) - Matt 12:22-23; Luke 11:14
14. Tempest stilled (Galilee) - Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:37-41; Luke 8:22-25
15. Two demoniacs cured (Gadara) - Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39
16. Jairus' daughter raised (Capernaum) - Matt 9:23; Mark 5:23; Luke 8:41
17. Woman with issue of blood healed (Capernaum) - Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
18. Blind men cured (Capernaum) - Matt 9:27-31
19. Dumb spirit cast out (Capernaum) - Matt 9:32-33
20. Five thousand fed (Galilee) - Matt 14:15-21; Mark 6:35-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14
21. Walking on the sea (Galilee) - Matt 14:25-33; Mark 6:48-52; John 6:15-21
22. Syrophenician's daughter healed (District of Tyre) - Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
23. Four thousand fed (Galilee) - Matt 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-9
24. Deaf and dumb man cured (Galilee) - Mark 7:31-37
25. Blind man healed (Bethsaida) - Mark 8:22-26
26. Devil cast out of boy (near Caesarea) - Matt 17:14-18; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43
27. Tribute money provided (Capernaum) - Matt 17:24-27
28. Passed unseen through crowd (in Temple) - John 8:59
29. Ten lepers cleansed (Samaria) - Luke 17:11-19
30. Man born blind healed (Jerusalem) - John 9:1-7
31. Lazarus raised from dead (Bethany) - John 11:38-44
32. Woman with infirmity cured (Peraea) - Luke 13:11-17
33. Man with dropsy cured (Peraea) - Luke 14:1-6
34. Two blind men cured (Jericho) - Matt 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43
35. Fig tree blasted (Mt. Olivet) - Matt 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14
36. Malchus' ear healed (Gethsemane) - Luke 22:50-51
37. Second draught of fishes (Galilee) - John 21:1-14
38. Resurrection of Christ - Luke 24:6; John 10:18

Appearances of Christ after His resurrection to:

1. Mary Magdalene (Jerusalem) - Mark 16:9
2. Other women (Jerusalem) - Matt 28:9
3. Two disciples (Emmaus) - Luke 24:15-31
4. Peter (Jerusalem) - 1 Cor 15:5
5. Ten apostles (Jerusalem) - John 20:19,24
6. Eleven apostles (Jerusalem) - John 20:26-28
7. Seven disciples fishing (Galilee) - John 21:1-24

8. Eleven apostles (Galilee) - Matt 28:16,17
9. Five hundred brethren - 1 Cor 15:6
10. James - 1 Cor 15:7
11. Eleven apostles on day of ascension (Bethany) - Acts 1:2-9
12. Paul at his conversion - Acts 9:1-5; 1 Cor 15:8

Miracles of Peter

1. Lame man cured - Acts 3:6
2. Death of Ananias and Sapphira - Acts 5:5, 10
3. Sick healed - Acts 5:15
4. Aeneas healed of palsy - Acts 9:34
5. Dorcas restored to life - Acts 9:40
6. His release from prison - Acts 12:7-11

Miracles of Paul

1. His sight - Acts 9:17-18; Acts 22:12-13
2. Elymas blinded - Acts 13:11
3. Lame man cured - Acts 14:10
4. Damsel freed from evil spirits - Acts 16:18; Acts 19:11,12
5. Earthquake at Philippi - Acts 16:25-26
6. Evil spirits overcame Sceva's seven sons - Acts 19:13-16
7. Eutychus restored to life - Acts 20:10
8. Unharmed by viper's bite - Acts 28:5
9. Publius' father healed - Acts 28:8

Other New Testament Miracles

1. Outpouring of the Holy Spirit - Acts 2:1-14; Acts, 2:3,4,11; Acts 10:46
2. Gift of tongues - Acts 19:6
3. Apostles freed from prison - Acts 5:19; Acts 12:7-11
4. Agabus' prophecies - Acts 11:28; Acts 21:11
5. Visions:
 - a. Three apostles' - Matt 17:2; Luke 9:32
 - b. Of Christ by dying Stephen - Acts 7:55-56
 - c. Ananias' - Acts 9:10
 - d. Peter's - Acts 10:1-48; Acts 11:1-30
 - e. Cornelius' - Acts 10:3-4, 30-32
 - f. Paul's - Acts 16:9; 2 Cor 12:1-5
 - g. John's on Patmos - Rev 1:10; Rev 4-22
6. Miracles by the seventy - Luke 10:17
7. Stephen performed great miracles - Acts 6:8
8. Philip cast out unclean spirits - Acts 8:6-13